Shakespeare Association
Facsimiles No. 6

GEORGE SILVER

PARADOXES OF DEFENCE

1599

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THE SHAKESPEARE ASSOCIATION FACSIMILES

No. 6

THE SHAKESPEARE ASSOCIATION FACSIMILES

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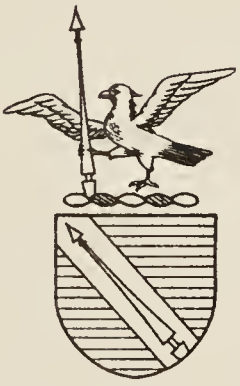
SHAKESPEARE ASSOCIATION
FACSIMILES NO. 6

G. SILVER

Paradoxes of Defence

1599

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
J. DOVER WILSON



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INTRODUCTION

(Including some speculations on the fencing-match in *Hamlet*).

"NONE can judge of the Craft but the Crafts-man," writes honest George Silver on page 7 of the ensuing book. In what case then is one who, having undertaken to preface this onslaught upon the Italianate Rapiermen of Shakespeare's day, must confess himself wholly unlearned in the art of fence, of whatever school, and indeed never to have handled sword in his life? His excuse must be, first, that another stout George, surnamed Harrison, hath so driven him into a toil that he is enforced either to submit or by refusal to incur a greater shame; and second, that those who crave comment by a fighting man may have perusal of the book in an edition published in 1898 by Captain Cyril G. R. Matthey of the London Rifle Brigade, member of the London Fencing Club, and membre d'honneur du cercle d'escrime de Bruxelles. There they may also not only read a reprint of Silver's "Bref instruction upon my paradoxes of defence," a manuscript in the British Museum never before published, but discover moreover that the controversy between the sword and the rapier, in which Silver lays about him so lustily, was by no means dead at the end of the nineteenth century, whatever may have befallen it in these latter days of tanks and poison gas.

I do not, however, suppose many members of

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the Shakespeare Association to be hot partisans of either weapon, or even expert craftsmen of the buttoned fleuret. What they will wish to know is what light the discussion sheds upon Shakespeare's plays. And here perhaps I am able to say a word or two, if not in illumination, at any rate to the kindling of further study. The modern practitioner is apt to interpret sixteenth-century fencing in terms of his own passes and weapons; and, though that doughty swordsman Egerton Castle went some way to the reconstruction of the sword-play of our ancestors, his *Schools and Masters of Fence* (1892), albeit full of learning and still the best if not the only book on the subject, is a biblion abiblion, in which one is sorely tasked to find one's way about, while neither he nor any other historian of fencing has been able to explain the most elaborate fencing scene in Shakespeare, to wit the play between Hamlet and Laertes. Indeed, I know of no serious treatment of the problems raised in that scene, except perhaps an old article in the *Saturday Review*[1] of the 'eighties (Vol. LXII, pp. 479-81), which though unsigned is patently by Egerton Castle or his friend Alfred Hutton, who advised Irving on the playing of the scene at the Lyceum, which tells us little more than is to be found in a short paragraph at the beginning of *Schools and Masters of Fence*, and which is definitely incorrect on more than one important question.

The first point to get clear is the nature of the weapons used in the Elizabethan or Jacobean duel and fencing-match, since that is the real ground of the debate between the two schools of thought

[1] *v.* Thimm (C. A.). *Complete Bibliography of Fencing and Duelling*, 1898.

at that time, a debate of which, if rightly understood, we may find many echoes in Shakespeare's plays. The main difference between duelling and sword-play was that in the latter the weapon was blunted, or as it was then said, "bated." Castle (pp. 191, 197), finds the earliest mention of buttoned foils in Pallavicini's *La Scherma Illustrata* (1670), and declares that they were not invented until the middle of the seventeenth century. Here at the outset an element of doubt is introduced by the N.E.D., which interprets "foil" without qualification as "a kind of small-sword with a blunt edge and a button at the point," and quotes from a letter of Drummond of Hawthorndene, dated August 6, 1606, "They would have most willingly taken the buttons off the foils." Further enquiry into the matter is, therefore, still necessary.

Nevertheless, I can see nothing in Shakespeare to show that he knew of buttons. Had he done so, they would undoubtedly have been referred to in *Hamlet*, where on the contrary it is perfectly obvious that the word "foil" means a sword or rapier with bated edge and blunted point, and where indeed the treacherous scheme of Laertes would have been impossible had buttoned fleurets been intended. And what Silver objects to is not the fleuret, of which he too probably knew nothing, but the new-fangled long rapier with which the Italian fencing-masters taught their pupils to thrust, as compared with the good old-fashioned English sword which was as handy for cutting as for thrusting. "These foils have all a length?" asks the unsuspicious Hamlet as he takes his choice; and

rapier-blades at that time of day might be of almost any length from 3 ft. 8 in. to 5 ft. 5 in., the longer ones being recommended by some as giving their possessors a great advantage in thrusting. Furthermore, duels and fencing-matches in the late sixteenth-century were generally fought with a dagger held in the left hand, by means of which the fencer could guard himself from thrusts on his left side, the rapier being his defence on his right. This fashion does not appear to have held its ground far into the seventeenth century, and it is perhaps significant, therefore, that while foils and daggers are mentioned by the Second Quarto text of *Hamlet* in the stage direction at 5.2.235, the corresponding direction in the Folio only speaks of foils.

Fashions in fencing changed, indeed, almost as rapidly as fashions in dress, and it is interesting to note how Shakespeare adapts his references to fencing accordingly. The duello and its attendant spirit, the Italian fencing-master, did not become the vogue in England until about 1590, and the earliest English books on the subject which Castle notes are a translation of di Grassi's *True Arte of Defence* (1594), a book already more than twenty years old in its Italian form, and Vincentio Saviolo's *Practice* (1595). It was to combat the latter that Silver wrote his *Paradoxes* four years later; and it is amusing to note that he follows the Italian in dedicating his book to the Earl of Essex, "the English Achilles" as Saviolo calls him. Silver tells us (p. 64) that the first Italian fencing-master to settle in London had been a certain Signior Rocco, who came over

about 1570; but though he had a following at court and set up a pretentious "college" of instruction in Blackfriars, his fees were evidently very high, and the popularity of rapier play in London appears to have been largely due to Saviolo, who set up a rival school to Rocco's about 1590 or 1591 (*v.* p. 66). Tybalt in *Romeo and Juliet* is evidently meant to represent a disciple of Saviolo's, and Silver's complaint of "the great losse of our English gallants, which we daily suffer by these imperfect fights, wherein none vndertake the combat, be his cause neuer so good, his cunning neuer so much, his strength and agilitie neuer so great, but his vertue was tied to fortune" (sig. A4v), might almost be a reference to the death of Mercutio. It was, however, Rocco and not Saviolo apparently who boasted that he could "hit anie English man with a thrust, iust vpon any button in his doublet," which "was much spoken of" (pp. 16, 69) and of which Mercutio's scornful "the very butcher of a silk button, a duellist, a duellist" is a clear echo. In any case, the Italian manner of fighting with rapier and dagger, instead of with sword and buckler, with thrust and pass instead of downright blows, won the day; and Mercutio's cry "Alla stoccata carries it away" was prophetic, as Hotspur's contemptuous reference to Prince Hal as "that same sword-and-buckler Prince of Wales" sufficiently testifies. In his early plays Shakespeare's sympathies are clearly with the old fashion that George Silver loved; but Hotspur's words in 1 *Henry iv* mark a change, and when we get to *Hamlet* we find Claudius the *laudator*

temporis acti and the Prince of Denmark a keen scrimer. And though Lear cries:

> I have seen the day, with my good *biting* falchion
> I would have made them skip,

he is an old man speaking at the end of a long life.

Nevertheless, it is not difficult to detect irony behind Shakespeare's treatment of the match between Hamlet and Laertes, an encounter which, in the first place, the Prince had no business whatever to be drawn into. The introduction of Osric, too, with his talk of hangers and "liberal-conceited carriages," which were the elaborately decorated straps required to suspend the long rapiers of fantastic fops off the ground, gives us a glimpse of Shakespeare's true opinion; and Osric, be it remembered, was one of the judges at the match and, therefore, presumably a recognised authority, to say nothing of his clear complicity in the plot against Hamlet's life. As for Ben Jonson, we can be certain that it was with no Italian or Spanish bird-spit and following no precepts of "the great Caranza" or di Grassi he won his *spolia opima* between the lines in Flanders; for he has recorded his notions on the duello in the immortal scene in which Bobadill and Matthew fence with bed-staves. And if George Silver was at the Globe in 1598 when *Every Man in his Humour* was first played, with what malicious glee must he have enjoyed the following dialogue:

> *Bob.* Look you, sir. Exalt not your point above this state at any hand, and let your poniard maintain your defence, thus . . . Come on: O, twine your body more about, that you may fall to a more sweet comely gentleman-like

guard. So, indifferent. Hollow your body more sir, thus. Now, stand fast o' your left leg, note your distance, keep your due proportion of time—O, you disorder your point, most irregularly!

Mat. How is the bearing of it now, sir?

Bob. O, out of measure ill! A well-experienced hand would pass upon you, at pleasure.

Mat. How mean you, sir, pass upon me?

Bob. Why, thus, sir (make a thrust at me) come in, upon the answer, control your point, and make a full career at the body. The best-practised gallants of the time name it the *passada:* a most desperate thrust, believe it!

Mat. Well, come, sir.

Bob. Why, you do not manage your weapon with any facility or grace to invite me: I have no spirit to play with you. Your dearth of judgment renders you tedious.

Mat. But one *venue*, sir.

Bob. *Venue!* Fie. Most gross denomination, as ever I heard. O, the *stoccata*, while you live, sir; note that.

Bobadill's last instruction carries us back to the fence-scene in *Hamlet*, where the phases of the match are called "passes" or "bouts" in the Folio and Second Quarto but "venies" in the First Quarto, a point not without significance as regards the origin of that pirated text.

Technically speaking, the chief problems of the sword-play in *Hamlet* are (i) the nature of the wager and the match, (ii) the manner in which the unbated and envenomed rapier is introduced, and (iii) the manner in which the opponents exchange their weapons; and of these the first is far the most difficult. "The King, sir," declares Osric to Hamlet, "hath laid, sir, that in a dozen passes between yourself and him, he shall not exceed you three hits; he hath laid on twelve for nine; and it would come to immediate trial."

"This wager," writes Dr. Johnson, "I do not understand. In a dozen passes one must exceed the other more or less than three hits. Nor can I comprehend how, in a dozen there can be twelve to nine. The passage is of no importance; it is sufficient that there is a wager." We can be certain that to the Elizabethans the passage *was* important, and that Shakespeare would be most careful to get the details of a sporting event both correct and intelligible. And had Samuel Johnson ever played Boswell at golf and been beaten "three up" by him, he would probably have realised that it is not always necessary to finish all the holes, or rounds, or bouts of an agreed match.

The first part of Osric's statement of the wager I interpret as follows: the King stipulates that Laertes must win three up in the match. But what of the rest, "he hath laid on twelve for nine"? Here, I think, commentators have all gone astray through failing to see that the "he" in this clause is identical with the "he" in the clause that immediately precedes it, *viz.*, Laertes; and that "laid on" means, not what "laid" means just before, but laid down conditions. In other words, Laertes on his side makes stipulations for a match of twelve passes instead of the usual nine, in order to give himself more elbow room to meet the heavy odds proposed by Claudius. To confirm this explanation it is necessary, however, to show that nine passes or bouts was actually the usual number played in a fencing-match at this period; and the contemporary writers, di Grassi, Saviolo, and Silver, are all far too much engrossed

in the exposition of their own peculiar doctrines of fence to give any straightforward account of sword-play itself. The nearest I can get to such an account is a tabular "Scheme of Laws to be observed in all fencing schools" to be found in Sir William Hope's *New Method of Fencing* (1707), the eighth law of which runs:

> None should be allowed to play above five or six fair given or received thrusts, because if people play briskly as they ought their vigour will be spent in that time, and what they do afterwards is but slow and without life and so unpleasant to the spectators; therefore, they had better give place to others in which time they may take their wind and fall to it again if they please.

This, since Hope was by way of being a reformer, suggests that more than five or six was the normal number of bouts, but provides nothing definite to build upon. In the end, it was Silver himself who gave me the clue I sought; for in his challenge to the foreign swordsmen he actually proposes a series of matches of nine bouts each: "three bouts apeece with three of the best English Maisters of Defence, & three bouts apeece with three vnskilful valiant men, and three bouts apeece with three resolute men half drunke" (p. 3); and he would hardly have cast his mock challenge in this form if nine bouts had not been customary in playing for a prize.

If we follow the course of the match, the foregoing explanation of the wager will appear reasonable enough. Hamlet wins the first two bouts straight off and draws the third; for "nothing neither way" (5.2.312) means that the opponents scored a hit simultaneously—"le coup double,"

as fencers call it, which would also be registered "no hit" by modern judges. No wonder the King exclaims after the second bout "Our son shall win!" Had the match gone forward, Laertes would have had a hard task; to pull it off against the odds, he must have won 5 bouts and drawn 4, or won 6, lost 1 and drawn 1. On the other hand, Hamlet had only to win 2 more and the match was over, for Laertes could not possibly have finished three up in that case. Dr. Johnson altogether ignores the possibility of draws.

One more point about the wager needs explanation to make all clear, *viz.*, the rather puzzling reference at 5.2.272:

> *King.* You know the wager?
> *Ham.* Very well, my lord.
> Your grace hath laid the odds o' the weaker side.

That is to say, "I understand the wager only too well; it means that you consider me the weaker party"; to which Claudius replies:

> *King.* I do not fear it, I have seen you both,
> But since he is better, we have therefore odds.

Here the Folio, and most modern editors read "better'd" for "better"; but the Second Quarto as usual provides the truer reading. Furthermore I believe that the word "better" does not refer at all, except perhaps in a quibbling sense, to the comparative merits of the two swordsmen; for it would surely be absurd that Claudius should first declare his disbelief in Hamlet's inferiority and in the same breath assert that Laertes is the better of the two. By "better" the King clearly means that it was Laertes who proposed the bet

or wager, and, therefore, had to give odds. In other words, so far from calling him the better fencer, he politely—he is ever polite to his "son"—protests that the wager has nothing whatever to do with his estimate of Laertes' skill. It was, of course, because he found himself forced to give these odds that Laertes stipulated that the match should be one of twelve instead of nine bouts.

How does Laertes introduce the poisoned and unbated rapier? If, as has been already said, fencing at that time had been by means of buttoned foils, deception would have been difficult if not impossible, since even the audience would have perceived that one of the weapons lacked its tip and it would have strained their credulity to suppose that Hamlet and the court did not perceive it. On the other hand, there would be little difference to the eye, except at close quarters, between a blunt and a sharp. Yet even so, Laertes could hardly have effected his scheme without an accomplice, and that the accomplice was Osric is made clear to the audience by the aside Laertes utters as he falls:

> *Osric.* How is't, Laertes?
> *Laer.* Why, as a woodcock to mine own springe, Osric;
> I am justly killed with mine own treachery.

The two understand each other; there is no need to explain what the treachery is. And this understanding makes the whole plot explicable. It is Osric who beguiles Hamlet to undertake the sword-play; it is Osric who acts as the chief judge; and it is the judges who are responsible, then as

now, for seeing that all is well and proper with the foils. Osric, therefore, when the court enters at 5.2.236, brings in the foils and daggers, and among them Laertes' specially prepared weapon, and sets them upon a table at the side of the room. There follows the talk between Hamlet and Laertes, after which Claudius says "Give them the foils, young Osric," and immediately engages Hamlet himself in conversation. Osric, of course, does not include the unbated foil in those he brings forward; that would be too dangerous. But while the King and Hamlet are talking, Laertes makes passes with the weapon he has chosen, declares it to be too heavy, and either goes to the table and takes the poisoned rapier or else Osric brings it to him when he says "let me see another." Meanwhile Hamlet, who has himself selected a foil from those first offered by Osric, makes a trial pass or two and declares himself satisfied. Even had he not been, and had gone to fetch another foil from the side-table, all danger was now past; "the treacherous instrument" was in Laertes' hand; the brief conversation with Claudius had done the trick for the schemers. It is all thought out most carefully by Shakespeare, and we cannot doubt that the various steps in the management of the plot would be followed with breathless attention by the fencers and swordsmen among his audience.

We now come to the exchange of weapons during the final bout, which led to the death of Laertes. "In scuffling they change Rapiers" is the stage-direction the Folio gives, while the First Quarto, which probably reports what

happened on the Globe stage, reads: "They catch one another's Rapiers, and both are wounded." Neither are very helpful, and unfortunately the Good Quarto gives us no help at all, the scoundrelly compositor responsible for setting up that text having probably omitted the direction he found in Shakespeare's manuscript. To discover exactly what happened, we must therefore attempt to reconstruct the incident from hints in the text and from what we can learn about contemporary fencing.

In the first place such exchange of weapons appears to have been not at all uncommon in the sword-play or duelling of the time when carried out by "single rapier." The French writer, Henri de Sainct-Didier (*Traicté*, 1573), for example, sets down "four excellent and subtle ways of seizing your enemy's sword, which may be found of much avail as well in the attack as the defence;" and Saviolo advises in his *Practise* (p. 16 v) how to seize the opponent's weapon with the left hand, which was covered with a "gauntlet or glove of mail," and of course in this case held no dagger. And when one of the fencers or duellists found his sword thus held he would naturally reply by seizing his opponent's in return, if he could; and thus an exchange of weapons might easily come to pass. This is, in fact, the explanation given of the exchange between Hamlet and Laertes by the author of the *Saturday Review* article already spoken of.

It is, however, attended by an insuperable difficulty, which the writer of the article tries to dispose of in the usual fashion by making free with

the text and talking of the carelessness of Shakespeare. For it is perfectly clear that Shakespeare intended the fight to be not by "single rapier," but by "rapier and dagger"; and if both fighters held a dagger in the left hand how could they seize each other's swords? It is true that the Folio text says nothing about daggers in the stage-direction for the bringing in of the weapons; but this direction may have been written or modified after the custom of employing daggers in fence had gone out, as it certainly had before 1623, when the Folio was printed. In any case the Folio stage-directions are all suspect, while the Second Quarto, as we have seen, provides for daggers as well as foils; and rightly too, since in the talk between Osric and Hamlet just before the match it is obvious that "rapier and dagger" are to be the weapons used.

What then? Is there a vulgar scrum between the two in which their weapons clatter to the stage, and so become exchanged, as is the general practice in the modern theatre? There is, I think, certainly a "scuffle" of some kind, that is to say, the fighters come to closer quarters than they normally should. The King's cry "Part them, they are incensed" proves that. But why this sudden incensement? To understand what is happening we must take up the account of the match where we left off, *viz.*, at the end of the third bout, which had been a draw. Just before this Laertes had assured Claudius in an aside that he intended to finish it off—"My lord, I'll hit him now." To which the King, astonished at the way Hamlet was holding his own, had doubtingly

replied "I do not think't." It was a doubt, indeed that was beginning to assail Laertes himself. What if, in spite of holding the poisoned sharp in his hand, he found himself unable to wound Hamlet with it before the match ended? They engage for the third time, and Laertes, in reply to Hamlet's jibe, presses hard upon him; but Hamlet still holds his own, and the bout ends in a draw with a simultaneous "touch" on either side, too slight, I take it, on Laertes' part to wound his opponent. The text at this point reads:

> *Osr.* Nothing neither way.
> *Laer.* Have at you now!
> *King.* Part them, they are incensed.

Osric's "Nothing neither way" marks the end of the bout, and he extends a rapier or staff between the combatants, as was the custom, to show that they should break off. Notwithstanding this, Laertes, as I understand Shakespeare's intention, attacks Hamlet treacherously while off his guard, shouting "Have at you now!" as he does so. In such fashion, as I am informed by fencers who remember Irving's performance of *Hamlet*, the scene was played, under Alfred Hutton's direction, at the Lyceum; and we cannot doubt that it is right. A treacherous attack was, indeed, almost the last chance of wounding Hamlet, and Laertes was growing desperate. But this final treachery was to cost him his own life. For Hamlet, justly incensed by being taken off his guard thus, and stung by the wound that Laertes has now given him, closes with him and strikes the sword

from his hand to the ground. Laertes replies by seizing Hamlet's sword with his empty right hand and wresting it from him, while parrying his dagger-thrust with dagger in his left hand. Whereupon Hamlet in his turn pounces upon the sword on the ground; and so the exchange is effected. There is no technical difficulty here, except Hamlet's method of disarming Laertes, and that is only a difficulty at first sight. For had the writer of the *Saturday Review* article known his di Grassi he would have found on sig. Bb. lv of the *True Arte* (1594) a careful explanation of how in rapier and dagger play one may jerk the sword out of an opponent's hand by using one's own sword as a lever and striking his sword sharply with the dagger in the left hand. This means closing in, since unless the sword-lever is applied well past the middle of the other sword, the device will hardly work. But Hamlet had "been in continual practice," as he tells Horatio, and knew the tricks of the scrimer's art as well as if not better than Laertes himself, hot from Paris.

To the modern spectator the fencing-match in *Hamlet* seems tame as the ghost-scenes seem slightly ridiculous. To the audience in Elizabeth's and James's London it must have been thrilling to an extraordinary degree. And we can well imagine what George Silver would have thought about it. He would have seen in the double death involved, and in the Italianate treachery with which it is all mixed up, a dramatic demonstration of the truth of his *Paradoxes*.

J. Dover Wilson.

PARADOXES
OF DEFENCE,

WHEREIN IS PROVED THE TRVE grounds of Fight to be in the ſhort auncient weapons, and that the ſhort Sword hath aduantage of the long Sword or long Rapier. And the weakeneſſe and imperfection of the Rapier-fights diſplayed. Together with an Admonition to the noble, ancient, victorious, valiant, and moſt braue nation of Engliſhmen, to beware of falſe teachers of Defence, and how they forſake their owne naturall fights: with a briefe commendation of the noble ſcience or exerciſing of Armes.

By George Siluer Gentleman.

LONDON,
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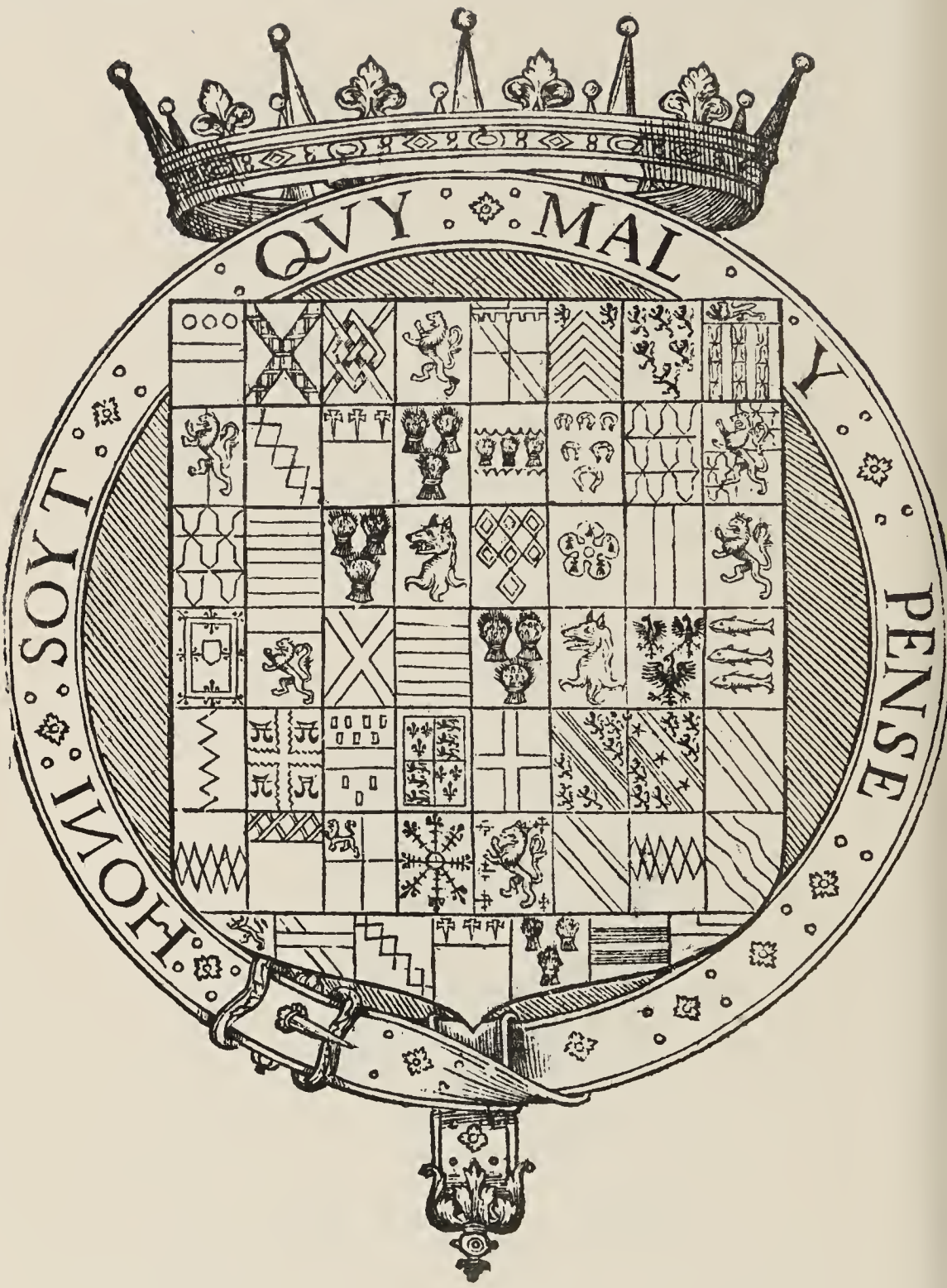
1599.


QVY MAL Y PENSE
HONI SOYT

TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE, MY SINGVLAR GOOD LORD, ROBERT EARLE OF Eſſex and Ewe, Earle Marſhall of England, Viſcount Hereford, Lord Ferrers of Chartley, Bourchier *and Louaine, Maiſter of the Queenes Maieſties horſe, &* of the Ordenance, Chancellor of the Vniuerſitie of Cam*bridge, Knight of the moſt noble order of the Garter, and one of her Highneſſe moſt honorable Priuy Counſell.*

FEncing (Right honorable) in this new fangled age, is like our faſhions, euerie daye a change, reſembling the Camelion, who altereth himſelfe into all colours ſaue white: ſo Fencing changeth into all wards ſaue the right. That it is ſo, experience teacheth vs: why it is ſo, I doubt not but your wiſedome doth conceiue. There is nothing permanent that is not true, what can be true that is vncertaine? how can that be certaine, that ſtands vpon vncertain

grounds? The mind of man a greedie hunter after truth, finding the ſeeming truth but chaunging, not alwayes one, but alwayes diuerſe, forſakes the ſuppoſed, to find out the aſſured certaintie: and ſearching euery where ſaue where it ſhould, meetes with all ſaue what it would. VVho ſeekes & finds not, ſeekes in vaine; who ſeekes in vaine, muſt if he wil find ſeeke againe: and ſeeke he may againe and againe, yet all in vaine. VVho ſeekes not what he would, as he ſhould, and where he ſhould, as in all other things (Right honourable) ſo in Fencing: the mind deſirous of truth, hunts after it, and hating falſhood, flies from it, and therfore hauing miſſed it once, it aſſayes the ſecond time: if then he thriues not, he tries another way: whē that hath failed he aduentures on the third: & if all theſe faile him, yet he neuer faileth to chaunge his weapon, his fight, his ward, if by any meanes he may compaſſe what he moſt affects: for becauſe men deſire to find out a true defence for themſelues in their fight, therefore they ſeeke it diligently, nature hauing taught vs to defend our ſelues, and Art teaching how: and becauſe we miſſe it in one way we chaunge to another. But though

though we often chop and change, turne and returne, from ward to ward, from fight to fight, in this vnconſtant ſearch, yet wee neuer reſt in anie, and that becauſe we neuer find the truth: and therefore we neuer find it, becauſe we neuer ſeeke it in that weapon where it may be found. For, to ſeeke for a true defence in an vntrue weapon, is to angle on the earth for fiſh, and to hunt in the ſea for Hares: truth is ancient though it ſeeme an vpſtart: our forefathers were wiſe, though our age account them fooliſh, valiant though we repute them cowardes: they found out the true defence for their bodies in ſhort weapons by their wiſdome, they defended them ſelues and ſubdued their enemies, with thoſe weapons with their valour. And (Right hono rable) if we will haue this true Defence, we muſt ſeeke it where it is, in ſhort Swords, ſhort Staues the halfe Pike, Partiſans, Gleues, or ſuch like weapons of perfect lēgths, not in long Swords, long Rapiers, nor frog pricking Poiniards: for if there be no certain grounds for Defence, why do they teach it? if there be, why haue they not found it? Not becauſe it is not: to ſay ſo, were to gainesay the truth: but becauſe it is not cer-

Engliſh maiſters of defence, are profitable members in the common wealth, if they teach with ancient Engliſh weapons of true Defence, weight and conuenient length, within the compaſſe of the ſtatures and ſtrength of men to command, becauſe it maketh them ſafe, bold, valiant, hardie, ſtrong and healthfull, and victorious in the warres, ſeruice of their Prince, defence of their friendes and countrey. But the Rapier in reaſon not to be taught, nor ſuffred to be taught, becauſe it maketh men fearefull and vnſafe in ſingle combat, and weak, & vnſeruiceable in the warres.

taine in thoſe weapons which they teach. To proue this, I haue ſet forth theſe my Paradoxes, different I confeſſe from the maine current of our outlandiſh teachers, but agreeing I am well aſſured to the truth, and tending as I hope to the honor of our Engliſh nation. The reaſon which moued me to aduenture ſo great a taske, is the deſire I haue to bring the truth to light, which hath long time lyen hidden in the caue of contempt, while we like degenerate ſonnes, haue forſaken our forefathers vertues with their weapons, and haue luſted like men ſicke of a ſtrange ague, after the ſtrange vices and deuiſes of Italian, French and Spaniſh Fencers, litle remembring, that theſe Apiſh toyes could not free Rome from Brennius ſacke, nor Fraunce from King Henrie the fift his conqueſt. To this deſire to find out truth the daughter of time, begotten of Bellona, I was alſo moued, that by it I might remoue the great loſſe of our Engliſh gallants, which we daily ſuffer by theſe imperfect fights, wherein none vndertake the combat, be his cauſe neuer ſo good, his cũning neuer ſo much, his ſtrength and agilitie neuer ſo great, but his vertue was tied to fortune: happie man, happie doale,

doale, kill or be killed is the dreadfull iſſue of this diuelliſh imperfect fight. If that man were now alriue, which beat the Maiſter for the ſcholers fault, becauſe he had no better inſtructed him, theſe Italian Fencers could not eſcape his cenſure, who teach vs Offence, not Defence, and to fight, as Diogenes ſcholers were taught to daunce, to bring their liues to an end by Art. VVas Aiax a coward becauſe he fought with a ſeuen foulded Buckler, or are we mad to go naked into the field to trie our fortunes, not our vertues? VVas Achilles a run-away, who ware that well tempered armour, or are we deſperat, who care for nothing but to fight, and learn like the Pigmeys, to fight with bodkins, or weapons of like defence? Is it valour for a man to go naked againſt his enemie? why then did the Lacedemonians puniſh him as deſperate, whom they rewarded for his vallour with a Lawrell crowne? But that which is moſt ſhamefull, they teach mē to butcher one another here at home in peace, wherewith they cannot hurt their enemies abrode in warre. For, your Honour well knowes, that when the battels are ioyned, and come to the charge, there is no roome for them

To that it will be obiected, that in the warres we vſe few Rapiers or none at all, but ſhort Swords. To that I anſwere: Thoſe are inſufficient alſo, for that they haue no

bilis, whereby they are inſufficient in their defence, and eſpecially for the hād, which being ſtroken although with a verie ſmal blow, moſt commonly is the loſſ of a mā, becauſe the force of his hand being taken from him, he is neither able to defend his life, nor greatly to offend his enemy: and againe, ſince the Rapier-fight hath bene taught, for lacke of practiſe they haue loſt the vſe of the blow.

to drawe their Bird-ſpits, and when they haue them, what can they doe with them? can they pierce his Corſlet with the point? can they vnlace his Helmet, vnbuckle his Armour, hew aſunder their Pikes with a *Stocata*, a *reuerſa*, a *Dritta*, a *Stramaſon*, or other ſuch like tēpeſtuous termes? no, theſe toyes are fit for children, not for men, for ſtragling boyes of the Campe, to murder poultrie, not for men of Honour to trie the battell with their foes. Thus I haue (right Honorable) for the trial of the truth, betweene the ſhort Sword and the long Rapier, for the ſauing of the liues of our Engliſh gallants, who are ſent to certaine death by their vncertaine fights, & for abandoning of that miſchieuous and imperfect weapon, which ſerues to kill our frieds in peace, but cannot much hurt our foes in warre, haue I at this time giuen forth theſe Paradoxes to the view of the world. And becauſe I knowe ſuch ſtraunge opinions had need of ſtout defence, I humbly craue your Honorable protection, as one in whom the true nobility of our victorious Aunceſtors hath taken vp his reſidence. It will ſute to the reſt of your Honours moſt noble cōplements, to maintaine the defence of their weapons

weapons whoſe vertues you poſſeſſe. It agrees with your Honourable diſpoſition, to receiue with fauour what is preſented with loue. It ſorts with your Lordſhips high authority, to weigh with reaſon, what is fit for marſhall men. It is an vſuall point of your Honor, which winnes your Lordſhip loue in your countrey, to defend the truth in whomſoeuer: and it addeth a ſupply to that vvhich your Lordſhip haue of late begun to your vnſpeakeable honor and our ineſtimable benefite, to reduce the vvearing of ſwordes vvith hilts ouer the hands, to the Romane diſcipline, no longer then they might draw them vnder their armes, or ouer their ſhoulders. In all or any of theſe reſpectes, I reſt aſſured that your Lordſhip vvill vouchſafe to receiue vvith fauor and maintaine vvith honour theſe Paradoxes of mine, vvhich if they be ſhrouded vnder ſo ſafe a ſhield, I vvill not doubt but to maintaine vvith reaſon amongſt the vviſe, and proue it by practiſe vpon the ignorant, that there is no certaine defence in the Rapier, and that there is great aduantage in the ſhort Sword againſt the long Rapier, or all maner of Rapiers in generall, of vvhat length ſoeuer. And that the ſhort Staffe

Why ſhould we leaue the hand naked, ſince therby our lymmes & liues are defended, our enemies diſcomforted, wounded, and executed? I ſee no reaſon but that the hand ſhould be as well armed and prouided for, as anie other part of the bodie.

hath the vauntage againſt the long Staffe of twelue, foureteene, ſixteene or eighteene foote long, or of what length ſoeuer. And againſt two men vvith their Swordes and Daggers, or two Rapiers, Poiniards & Gantlets, or each of them a caſe of Rapiers : vvhich vvhether I can performe or not, I ſubmit for triall to your Honors martiall cenſure, being at all times readie to make it good, in vvhat maner, and againſt vvhat man ſoeuer it ſhall ſtand vvith your Lordſhips good liking to appoint. And ſo I humbly commend this booke to your Lordſhips vviſedome to peruſe, and your Honour to the Higheſt to protect in all health and happineſſe novve and euer.

Your Honors in all dutie,

George Siluer.

AN

AN ADMONITION

TO THE NOBLE, ANCIENT, VICTORIOVS, VALIANT, AND MOST BRAVE NATION OF ENGLISHMEN.

GEorge *Siluer* hauing the perfect knowledge of all maner of weapōs, and being experiēced in all maner of fights, thereby perceiuing the great abuſes by the *Italian* Teachers of Offence done vnto them, the great errors, inconueniences, & falſe reſolutions they haue brought them into, haue inforced me, euen of pitie of their moſt lamentable wounds and ſlaughters, & as I verily thinke it my bounden dutie, with all loue and humilitie to admoniſh them to take heed, how they ſubmit themſelues into the hands of *Italian* teachers of Defence, or ſtraungers whatſoeuer; and to beware how they forſake or ſuſpect their owne naturall fight, that they may by caſting off of theſe Italianated, weake, fantaſticall, and moſt diuelliſh and imperfect fights, and by exerciſing of their owne ancient weapons, be reſtored, or atchieue vnto their natural, and moſt manly and victorious fight againe, the dint and force whereof manie

braue nations haue both felt and feared. Our ploughmen haue mightily preuailed againſt them, as alſo againſt Maiſters of Defence both in Schooles and countries, that haue taken vpon thē to ſtand vpon Schoole-trickes and iugling gambalds: whereby it grew to a common ſpeech among the countrie-men, Bring me to a Fencer, I will bring him out of his fence trickes with good downe right blowes, I will make him forget his fence trickes I will warrant him. I ſpeake not againſt Maiſters of Defence indeed, they are to be honoured, nor againſt the Science, it is noble, and in mine opiniō to be preferred next to Diuinitie; for as Diuinitie preſerueth the ſoule from hell and the diuell, ſo doth this noble Science defend the bodie from wounds & ſlaughter. And moreouer, the exerciſing of weapons putteth away aches, griefes, and diſeaſes, it increaſeth ſtrength, and ſharpneth the wits, it giueth a perfect iudgement, it expelleth melancholy, cholericke and euill conceits, it keepeth a man in breath, perfect health, and long life. It is vnto him that hath the perfection thereof, a moſt friendly and comfortable companion when he is alone, hauing but only his weapon about him, it putteth him out of all feare, & in the warres and places of moſt danger it maketh him bold, hardie, and valiant.

And for as much as this noble and moſt mightie nation of Engliſhmen, of their good natures, are alwayes moſt louing, verie credulous, & ready to cheriſh & protect ſtrāgers: yet that through their good natures they neuer more by ſtrangers or falſe teachers may be deceiued, once againe I am moſt humbly to admoniſh thē, or ſuch as ſhal find in themſelues a diſpoſition or deſire to learne their weapons of them, that from henceforth as ſtran-

ſtrangers ſhall take vpon them to come hither to teach this noble & moſt valiant, & victorious nation to fight, that firſt, before they learne of them, they cauſe a ſufficient triall of them to be made, whether the excellencie of their skill be ſuch as they profeſſe or no, the triall to be very requiſite & reaſonable, euen ſuch as I my ſelfe would be contented withall, if I ſhould take vpon me to go in their countrie to teach their nation to fight. And this is the triall: they ſhall play with ſuch weapõs as they profeſſe to teach withall, three bouts apeece with three of the beſt Engliſh Maiſters of Defence, & three bouts apeece with three vnskilful valiant men, and three bouts apeece with three reſolute men half drunke. Then if they can defend thẽſelues againſt theſe maiſters of Defence, and hurt, and go free from the reſt, then are they to be honored, cheriſhed, and allowed for perfect good teachers, what countrey men ſoeuer they be: but if of anie of theſe they take foile, then are they imperfect in their profeſſion, their fight is falſe, & they are falſe teachers, deceiuers and murtherers, and to be puniſhed accordingly, yet no worſe puniſhment vnto them I wiſh, then ſuch as in their triall they ſhall find.

A great fauor to giue them choice of their weapons, becauſe profeſſors of armes ought to be skilfull with all maner of weapõs.

There are foure eſpeciall markes to know the Italian fight is imperfect & that the Italian teachers and ſetters forth of books of Defence, neuer had the perfection of the true fight.

The firſt marke is, they ſeldome fight in their owne country vnarmed, commonly in this ſort, a paire of Gantlettes vpon their hands, and a good ſhirt of maile vpon their bodies. 2

Yet they perſwaders that the croſſe of the Rapier without hilt or gantlet is ſufficient.

The ſecõd marke is, that neither the Italians, nor any

of their beſt ſcholers do neuer fight , but they are moſt cõmonly ſore hurt, or one or both of them ſlaine.

The third marke is, they neuer teach their ſcholers, nor ſet downe in their bookes anie perfect lengthes of their weapons,without the which no man can by nature or Art againſt the perfect lẽgth fight ſafe, for being too ſhort, their times are too long, and ſpaces too wide for their defence,and being too long, they wilbe vpon euerie croſſe that ſhall happen to be made, whether it be done by skil or chance,in great danger of death; becauſe the Rapier being too long, the croſſe cannot be vndone in due time, but may be done by going backe with the feete; but that time is alwaies too long to anſwere the time of the hand, therfore euery man ought to haue a weapon according to his owne ſtature: the tall man muſt haue his weapon longer then the man of meane ſtature,or elſe he hath wrong in his defence,& the man of meane ſtature muſt haue his weapon longer then the man of ſmal ſtature,or elſe he hath wrong in his defence; & the man of ſmall ſtature muſt beware that he feed not himſelf with this vaine cõceipt,that he wil haue his weapon long, to reach as farre as the tall man , for therin he ſhal haue great diſaduantage,both in making of a ſtrong croſſe, and alſo in vncroſſing againe, and in keeping his point from croſſing , and when a croſſe is made vpon him,to defend himſelf, or indanger his enemie, or to redeeme his loſt times . Againe Rapiers longer, then is conuenient to accord with the true ſtatures of men,are alwaies too long or too heauie to keepe their bodies in due time from the croſſe of the light ſhort ſword of perfect length, the which being made by the skilfull out of any of the foure true times,vpon any of the foure chiefe

Acti-

Actions, by reaſon of the vncertaintie & great ſwiftneſſe in any of theſe times, they are in great danger of a blow, or of a thruſt in the hand, arme, head, body, or face, & in euerie true croſſe in the vncroſſing, in great danger of a blow vpon the head, or a full thruſt in the bodie or face: and being taken in that time & place, the firſt mouer in vncroſſing ſpeedeth the Rapier man of imperfect lēgth, whether it be too long, too ſhort or too heauie, and goeth free himſelfe by the direction of his gouernours.

The fourth marke is, the croſſes of their Rapiers for true defence of their hands are imperfect, for the true cariage of the guardant fight, without the which all fights are imperfect.

Of ſixe chiefe cauſes, that many valiant men thinking themſelues by their practiſes to be skilfull in their weapons, are yet manie times in their fight ſore hurt, and manie times ſlaine by men of ſmall skill, or none at all.

THe firſt and chiefeſt cauſe is, the lacke of the foure Gouernours, without the which it is impoſſible to fight ſafe, although a man ſhould practiſe moſt painfully and moſt diligently all the daies of his life. 3

The ſecond cauſe is, the lacke of knowledge in the due obſeruance of the foure Actions, the which we cal bent, ſpent, lying ſpent, and drawing backe: theſe Actions euerie man fighteth vpon, whether they be skilfull or vnskilfull, he that obſerueth them is ſafe, he that obſerueth thē not, is in cōtinuall danger of euerie thruſt that ſhalbe ſtrongly made againſt him.

The third cauſe is, they are vnpractiſed in the foure true times, neither do they know the true times frō the falſe: therefore the true choiſe of their times are moſt commonly taken by chance, and ſeldome otherwiſe.

The fourth cauſe is, they are vnacquainted out of what fight, or in what maner they are to anſwer the variable fight: and therefore becauſe the variable fight is the moſt eaſieſt fight of all other, moſt cōmonly do anſwer the variable fight with the variable fight, which ought neuer to be but in the firſt diſtance, or with the ſhort Sword againſt the long, becauſe if both or one of them ſhall happen to preſe, and that in due time of neither ſide fight be changed, the diſtance, by reaſon of narrowneſſe of ſpace, is broken, the place is won and loſt of both ſides, then he that thruſteth firſt, ſpeedeth: if both happen to thruſt together, they are both in dāger. Theſe things ſometimes by true times, by change of fights, by chance are auoided.

The fift cauſe is, their weapons are moſt commonly too long to vncroſſe without going backe with the feet.

The ſixt cauſe is, their weapons are moſt commonly too heauie both to defend and offend in due time, & by theſe two laſt cauſes many valiāt mē haue loſt their liues

What is the cauſe that wiſemen in learning or practiſing their weapons, are deceiued with Italian Fencers.

No fight perfect that is not done in force & true time.

THere are foure cauſes: the firſt, their ſchoolmaiſters are imperfect: the ſecond is, that whatſoeuer they teach, is both true & falſe; true in their demōſtrations, according with their force & time in gētle play, & in their actions

actions according with true force & time in rough play or fight, false: for exãple, there is as much difference betwixt these two kind of fights, as there is betwixt the true picture of Sir *Beuis* of *Southampton*, & Sir *Beuis* himself, if he were liuing. The third, none cã iudge of the Craft but the Crafts-man; the vnskilfull, be he neuer so wise, can not truly iudge of his teacher, or skill, the which he learneth, being vnskilful himselfe. Lastly, & to confirme for truth all that shal be amisse, not only in this excellẽt Science of Defence, but in all other excellent secrets, most commonly the lye beareth as good a shew of truth, as truth it selfe.

Of the false resolutions and vaine opinions of Rapier-men, and of the danger of death thereby ensuing.

IT is a great question, & especially amõgst 4 the Rapier-men, who hath the vantage of the thruster, or of the warder. Some hold strongly, that the warder hath the vantage: others say, it is most certain that the thruster hath the vantage. Now when two do happẽ to fight, being both of one mind, that the thruster hath the vantage, they make all shift they can, who shall giue the first thrust: as for example, two Captaines at *Southampton* euen as they were going to take shipping vpon the key, fel at strife, drew their Rapiers, and presently, being desperate, hardie or resolute, as they call it, with all force and ouer great speed, ran with their rapiers one at the other, & were both slaine. Now when two of the contrary opinion shall meet and fight, you shall see verie peaceable warres betweene them: for they verily thinke that he

that firſt thruſteth is in great danger of his life, therefore with all ſpeede do put themſelues in ward, or Stocata, the ſureſt gard of all other, as *Vincentio* ſaith, and therevpon they ſtand ſure, ſaying the one to the other, thruſt and thou dare; and ſaith the other, thruſt and thou dare, or ſtrike or thruſt and thou dare, ſaith the other: then ſaith the other, ſtrike or thruſt and thou dare for thy life. Theſe two cunning gentlemen ſtanding long time together, vpon this worthie ward, they both depart in peace, according to the old prouerbe: It is good ſleeping in a whole skinne. Againe if two ſhall fight, the one of opinion, that he that thruſteth hath the vantage, and the other of opinion, that the warder hath the vantage, then moſt commonly the thruſter being valiant, with all ſpeed thruſteth home, and by reaſon of the time and ſwift motion of his hand, they are moſt commonly with the points of their rapiers, or daggers, or both, one or both of them hurt or ſlaine; becauſe their ſpaces of defence in that kind of fight, are too wide in due time to defend, and the place being wonne, the eye of the Patient by the ſwift motion of the Agents hand, is deceiued. Another reſolution they ſtand ſure vpon for their liues, to kill their enemies, in the which they are moſt commonly ſlaine themſelues: that is this: When they find the point of their enemies rapier out of the right line, they ſay, they may boldly make home a thruſt with a *Paſſata*, the which they obſerue, and do accordingly: but the other hauing a ſhorter time with his hand, as nature manie times teacheth him, ſodainly turneth his wriſt, whereby he meeteth the other in his paſſage iuſt with the point of his rapier in the face or body. And this falſe reſolution hath coſt manie a life.

That the cauſe that manie are ſo often ſlaine, and manie ſore hurt in fight with long Rapiers, is not by reaſon of their dangerous thruſts, nor cunningneſſe of that Italienated fight, but in the length and vnweildineſſe thereof.

IT is moſt certaine, that men may with ſhort ſwords both ſtrike, thruſt, falſe and double, by reaſon of their diſtance and nimbleneſſe thereof, more dangerouſly then they can with long Rapiers: and yet when two fight with ſhort ſwordes, hauing true fight, there is no hurt done: neither is it poſſible in anie reaſon, that anie hurt ſhould be done betwixt them of either ſide, and this is well knowne to all ſuch as haue the perfection of true fight. By this it plainely appeareth, that the cauſe of the great ſlaughter, and ſundrie hurts done by long Rapiers, conſiſteth not in long Reach, dangerous thruſtes, nor cunningneſſe of the Italian fight, but in the inconuenient length, and vnweildineſſe of their long Rapiers: whereby it commonly falleth out, that in all their Actions appertaining to their defence, they are vnable, in due time to performe, and continually in danger of euerie croſſe, that ſhall happen to be made with their rapier blades, which being done, within the halfe rapier; (vnleſſe both be of one mind with all ſpeed to depart, which ſeldome or neuer happneth betweene men of valiant diſpoſition,) it is impoſſible to vncroſſe, or get out, or to auoid the ſtabbes of the Daggers. And this hath falne out manie times amongſt valiant men at thoſe weapons.

Of running and ſtanding faſt in rapier fight, the runner hath the vantage.

IF two valiant men do fight being both cunning in running, & that they both vſe the ſame at one inſtant, their courſe is doubled, the place is wonne of both ſides, and one or both of them will commonly be ſlaine or ſore hurt: and if one of them ſhall runne, and the other ſtand faſt vpon the *Imbrocata* or *Stocata*, or howſoeuer, the place wilbe at one inſtant wonne of one ſide, and gained of the other, and one or both of them wilbe hurt or ſlaine, if both ſhall preſe hard vpon the guard, he that firſt thruſteth home in true place, hurteth the other, & if both thruſt together, they are both hurt, yet ſome vantage the runner hath, becauſe he is an vncertaine marke, and in his motion: the other is a certaine marke, and in a dead motion: and by reaſon thereof manie times the vnskilfull man taketh vantage he knoweth not how, againſt him that lyeth watching vpon his ward or *Stocata* guard.

Of ſtriking and thruſting both together.

7 IT is ſtrongly holden of manie, that if in fight they find their enemy to haue more skill then themſelues, they preſently will continually ſtrike, & thruſt iuſt with him, whereby they will make their fight as good as his, and thereby haue as good aduantage as the other with all his skill: but if their ſwordes be longer then the other, then their aduantage is great; for it is certaine

certaine (ſay they) that an inch will kill a man: but if their ſwordes be much longer then the other, then their aduantage is ſo great, that they wilbe ſure by thruſting and ſtriking iuſt with the other, that they will alwaies hurt him that hath the ſhort ſword, and go cleare themſelues, becauſe they will reach him, when he ſhall not reach them. Theſe men ſpeake like ſuch as talke of Robin Hoode, that neuer ſhot in his bow; for to ſtrike or thruſt iuſt together with a man of skill, lyeth not in the will of the ignorant, becauſe the skilfull man alwaies fighteth vpon the true times, by the which the vnskilfull is ſtill diſappointed of both place and time, and therefore driuen of neceſſitie ſtill to watch the other, when & what he will doe; that is, whether he will ſtrike, thruſt, or falſe: if the vnskilfull ſtrike or thruſt in the time of falſing, therein he neither ſtriketh nor thruſteth iuſt with the other, he may ſaie, he hath ſtroke or thruſt before him, but not iuſt with him, nor to anie good purpoſe; for in the time of falſing, if he ſtrike or thruſt, he ſtriketh or thruſteth too ſhort, for in that time he hath neither time nor place to ſtrike home, and as it is ſaid, the vnskilfull man, that will take vpon him to ſtrike or thruſt iuſt with the skilfull, muſt firſt behold what the man of skil will doe, and when he will doe it, and therfore of neceſſitie is driuen to ſuffer the skilfull man to be the firſt mouer, and entred into his Action, whether it be blow or thruſt, the truth therof in reaſon cannot be denied. Now iudge whether it be poſſible for an vnskilfull man to ſtrike or thruſt iuſt together with a man of skill; but the skilfull man can moſt certainly ſtrike and thruſt iuſt together with the vnskilfull, becauſe the vnskilfull fighteth vpon falſe times, which being too long

to anſwere the true times, the skilfull fighting vpon the true times, although the vnskilfull be the firſt mouer, & entred into his Action, whether it be blow or thruſt; yet the ſhortneſſe of the true times maketh at the pleaſure of the skilfull a iuſt meeting together: in perfect fight two neuer ſtrike or thruſt together, becauſe they neuer ſuffer place nor time to performe it.

Two vnskilfull men manie times by chance ſtrike and thruſte together, chance vnto them, becauſe they know not what they doe, or how it commeth to paſſe: but the reaſons or cauſes be theſe. Sometimes two falſe times meet & make a iuſt time together, & ſometimes a true time and a falſe time meeteth and maketh a iuſt time together, and ſometimes two true times meet and make a iuſt time together. And all this hapneth becauſe the true time and place is vnknowne vnto them.

George Siluer his reſolution vpon that hidden or doubtfull queſtion, who hath the aduantage of the Offender or Defender.

The aduantage is ſtrongly holden of many to be in the offender, yea in ſomuch, that if two minding to offend in their fight, it is thought to be in him that firſt ſtriketh or thruſteth. Others ſtrongly hold opinion that the wardr abſolutely hath ſtill the aduantage, but theſe opinions as they are contrary the one to the other: ſo are they contrarie to true fight, as may well be ſeene by theſe ſhort examples. If the aduantage be in the warder, then it is not good anie time to ſtrike or thruſt: if the aduantage be in the ſtriker or thruſter, then were it a friuolous

a friuolous thing to learne to ward, or at anie time to ſeeke to ward, ſince in warding lieth diſaduantage. Now may it plainly by theſe examples appeare, that if there be anie perfection in fight, that both ſides are deceiued in their opinions, becauſe if the ſtriker or thruſter haue the aduantage, then is the warder ſtill in danger of wounds or death. And againe, if the warder hath the aduantage, then is the ſtriker or thruſter in as great daunger to defend himſelfe againſt the warder, becauſe the warder from his wards, taketh aduantage of the ſtriker or thruſter vpon euerie blow or thruſt, that ſhall be made againſt him. Then thus I conclude, that if there be perfection in the Science of Defence, they are all in their opinons deceiued; and that the truth may appeare for the ſatisfaction of all men, this is my reſolution: there is no aduantage abſolutely, nor diſaduantage in ſtriker, thruſter, or warder: and there is a great aduantage in the ſtriker thruſter & warder: but in this maner, in the perfection of fight the aduantage conſiſteth in fight betweene partie and partie: that is, whoſoeuer winneth or gaineth the place in true pace, ſpace and time, hath the aduantage, whether he be ſtriker, thruſter or warder. And that is my reſolution.

Of Spanish fight with the Rapier.

THe *Spaniard* is now thought to be a better man with his Rapier then is the Italian, Frenchman, high Almaine, or anie other countrie man whatſoeuer, becauſe they in their Rapier-fight ſtand vpon ſo manie intricate trickes, 9

that in all the courſe of a mans life it ſhall be hard to learne them, and if they miſſe in doing the leaſt of them in their fight, they are in danger of death. But the *Spaniard* in his fight, both ſafely to defend himſelfe, and to endanger his enemie, hath but one onely lying, and two wards to learne, wherein a man with ſmall practiſe in a verie ſhort time may become perfect.

This is the maner of Spaniſh fight, they ſtand as braue as they can with their bodies ſtraight vpright, narrow ſpaced, with their feet continually mouing, as if they were in a dance, holding forth their armes and Rapiers verie ſtraight againſt the face or bodies of their enemies: & this is the only lying to accompliſh that kind of fight. And this note, that as long as any man ſhall lie in that maner with his arme, and point of his Rapier ſtraight, it ſhall be impoſſible for his aduerſarie to hurt him, becauſe in that ſtraight holding forth of his arme, which way ſoeuer a blow ſhall be made againſt him, by reaſon that his Rapier hilt lyeth ſo farre before him, he hath but a verie litle way to moue, to make his ward perfect, in this maner. If a blow be made at the right ſide of the head, a verie litle mouing of the hand with the knuckles vpward defendeth that ſide of the head or bodie, and the point being ſtill out ſtraight, greatly endangereth the ſtriker: and ſo likewiſe, if a blow be made at the left ſide of the head, a verie ſmall turning of the wriſt with the knuckles downward, defendeth that ſide of the head and bodie, and the point of the Rapier much indangereth the hand, arme, face or bodie of the ſtriker: and if anie thruſt be made, the wards, by reaſon of the indirections in mouing the feet in maner of dauncing, as aforeſaid, maketh a perfect ward, and ſtill withall the

point

point greatly endangereth the other. And thus is the Spaniſh fight perfect: ſo long as you can keepe that order, and ſoone learned, and therefore to be accounted the beſt fight with the Rapier of all other. But note how this Spaniſh fight is perfect, and you ſhall ſee no longer then you can keepe your point ſtraight againſt your aduerſarie: as for example, I haue heard the like ieſt.

There was a cunning Doctor at his firſt going to ſea, being doubtfull that he ſhould be ſea-ſicke, an old woman perceiuing the ſame, ſaid vnto him: Sir, I pray be of good comfort, I will teach you a tricke to auoid that doubt; here is a fine pible ſtone, if you pleaſe to accept it, take it with you, and when you be on ſhip-bord, put it in your mouth, and as long as you ſhall keepe the ſame in your mouth, vpon my credit you ſhall neuer vomit: the Doctor beleeued her and tooke it thankfully at her hands, and when he was at ſea, he began to be ſicke, whereupon he preſently put the ſtone in his mouth, & there kept it ſo long as he poſſibly could, but through his extreme ſickneſſe the ſtone with vomit was caſt out of his mouth: then preſently he remẽbred how the woman had mocked him, and yet her words were true.

Euen ſo a *Spaniard* hauing his Rapier point put by, may receiue a blow on the head, or a cut ouer the face, hand, or arme, or a thruſt in the body or face, and yet his Spaniſh fight perfect, ſo long as he can keepe ſtraight the point of his Rapier againſt the face or body of his aduerſarie, which is as eaſie in that maner of fight to be done, as it was for the Doctor in the extremity of his vomite to keepe the ſtone in his mouth.

Yet one other pretie ieſt more, ſcarce worth the rea-

ding, in commendation of outlandiſh fight. There was an *Italian* teacher of Defence in my time, who was ſo excellent in his fight, that he would haue hit anie Engliſh man with a thruſt, iuſt vpon any button in his doublet, and this was much ſpoken of.

Alſo there was another cunning man in catching of wildgeeſe, he would haue made no more ado, when he had heard them crie, as the maner of wildgeeſe is, flying one after another in rowes, but preſently looking vp, would tell them, if there had bene a doſen, ſixteene, twētie, or more, he would haue taken euerie one. And this tale was manie times told by men of good credit, and much maruelled at by the hearers: & the man that wold haue taken the wildgeeſe, was of good credite himſelfe: marie they ſaid, indeed he did neuer take anie, but at anie time when he had looked vp, and ſeene them flie in that maner, he would with all his heart haue taken thē, but he could no more tell how to do it, then could the cunning *Italian* Fencer tell how to hit an Engliſhman, with a thruſt iuſt vpon any one of his buttons, when he liſted.

Illuſions for the maintenance of imperfect weapons & falſe fights, to feare or diſcourage the vnskilfull in their weapons, from taking a true courſe or vſe, for attaining to the perfect knowledge of true fight.

10 FIrſt, for the Rapier (ſaith the *Italian*, or falſe teacher) I hold it to be a perfect good weapō, becauſe the croſſe hindreth not to hold the handle in the hand, to thruſt both far & ſtraight, & to vſe all maner of aduantages in the wards,

Or

or ſodainly to caſt the ſame at the aduerſarie, but with the Sword you are driuen with all the ſtrength of the hand to hold faſt the handle. And in the warres I would wiſh no friend of mine to weare Swords with hilts, becauſe when they are ſodainly ſet vpon, for haſte they ſet their hands vpon their hilts in ſteed of their handles: in which time it hapneth manie times before they can draw their ſwords, they are ſlaine by their enemies. And for Sword and Buckler fight, it is imperfect, becauſe the buckler blindeth the ſight, neither would I haue anie man lie aloft with his hand aboue his head, to ſtrike ſound blowes. Strong blowes are naught, eſpecially being ſet aboue the head, becauſe therein all the face and bodie is diſcouered. Yet I confeſſe, in old times, when blowes were only vſed with ſhort Swords & bucklers, & back Sword, theſe kind of fights were good & moſt mãly, but now in theſe daies fight is altered. Rapiers are lõger for aduãtage thẽ ſwords were wõt to be: whẽ blowes were vſed, men were ſo ſimple in their fight, that they thought him to be a coward, that wold make a thruſt or ſtrike a blow beneath the girdle. Againe, if their weapõs were ſhort, as in times paſt they were, yet fight is better looked into in theſe dayes, than then it was. Who is it in theſe daies ſeeth not that the blow cõpaſſeth round like a wheele, whereby it hath a longer way to go, but the thruſt paſſeth in a ſtraight line, and therefore commeth a nearer way, and done in a ſhorter time thẽ is the blow, and is more deadly then is the blow? Therefore there is no wiſe man that will ſtrike, vnleſſe he be wearie of his life. It is certaine, that the point for aduantage euerie way in fight is to be vſed, the blow is vtterly naught, and not to be vſed. He that fighteth vpon the

Theſe counterfeit ſhews are enough to cary the wiſeſt that know not the true fight frõ the falſe, out of the right way.

And if their weapons were ſhort, as in times paſt they were, yet they could not thruſt ſafe at body or face, becauſe in gardant fight they fall ouer, or vnder the perfect croſſe of the ſword & to ſtrike beneath the waſte, or at the legges, is great diſaduantage, becauſe the courſe of the blow to the legs is too far, & therby the head, face, & body is diſcouered: and that was the cauſe in old time, that they did not thruſt nor ſtrike at the legs, & not for lacke of ſkill.

as in theſe daies we imagine. Againe, if a man in theſe daies ſhold haue fought with a long ſword, they would preſently haue put him into Gobbes Trauers.

blow eſpecially with a ſhort ſword, wilbe ſore hurt or ſlaine. The deuill can ſay no more for the maintenance of errors.

That a blow commeth continually as neare a way as a thruſt, and moſt commonly nearer, ſtronger, more ſwifter, and is ſooner done.

11 *A confutation of their errours.*

THe blow, by reaſō that it compaſſeth round like a wheele, whereby it hath a longer way to come, as the Italian Fenſer ſaith, & that the thruſt paſſing in a ſtraight line, commeth a nearer way, and therefore is ſooner done then a blow, is not true: theſe be the prooſes.

Let two lie in their perfect ſtrengths and readineſſe, wherein the blades of their Rapiers by the motion of the body, may not be croſſed of either ſide, the one to ſtrike, and the other to thruſt. Then meaſure the diſtance or courſe wherein the hand and hilt paſſeth to finiſh the blow of the one, and the thruſt of the other, and you ſhall find them both by meaſure, in diſtance all one. And let anie man of iudgement being ſeene in the exerciſe of weapons, not being more addicted vnto nouelties of fight, then vnto truth it ſelfe, put in meaſure, and practiſe theſe three fights, variable, open, and guardant, and he ſhall ſee, that whenſoeuer anie man lyeth at the thruſt vpon the variable fight, (where of neceſſitie moſt commonly he lyeth, or otherwiſe not poſſiblie to keepe his Rapier from croſſing at the blow & thruſt, vpon the open or gardant fight,) that the blowes & thruſtes from theſe two fightes, come a nearer way, and a more ſtronger

ſtronger and ſwifter courſe then doth the thruſt, out of the variable fight. And thus for a generall rule, whereſoeuer the Thruſter lyeth, or out of what fight ſoeuer he fighteth, with his Rapier, or Rapier and Dagger, the blow in his courſe commeth as neare, and nearer, and more ſwift and ſtronger then doth the thruſt.

Perfect fight ſtandeth vpon both blow and thruſt, therefore the thruſt is not onely to be vſed.

THat there is no fight perfect without both blow and thruſt: neither is there anie certaine rule to be ſet downe for the vſe of the point onely, theſe be the reaſons: In fight there are manie motions, with the hand, bodie, and feet, and in euerie motion the place of the hand is altered, & becauſe by the motions of the hand, the altering of the places of the hand, the changes of lyings, wards, and breaking of thruſtes, the hand will ſometimes be in place to ſtrike, ſome times to thruſt, ſometimes after a blow to thruſt, and ſometimes after a thruſt to ſtrike, & ſometimes in place where you may ſtrike, and cannot thruſt without loſſe of time, and ſometimes in place where you may thruſt, and cannot ſtrike without loſſe of time, and ſometimes in place where you can neither ſtrike nor thruſt, vnleſſe you fight vpon both blow and thruſt, nor able to defend your ſelfe by ward or going backe, becauſe your ſpace wilbe too wide, and your diſtance loſt. And ſometimes when you haue made a thruſt, a ward or breaking is taken in ſuch ſort with the Dagger or blade of the Sword, that you cā neither thruſt againe, nor defend your ſelfe vnleſſe you do ſtrike, which 12

This in truth cannot be denied.

you may ſoundly doe, and go free, and ſometimes when you ſtrike, a ward wilbetaken in ſuch ſort, that you cannot ſtrike againe, nor defend your ſelfe, vnleſſe you thruſt, which you may ſafely doe and goe free. So to conclude, there is no perfection in the true fight, without both blow and thruſt, nor certaine rule to be ſet downe for the point onely.

That the blow is more dangerous and deadly in fight, then a thruſt, for proofe thereof to be made according with Art, an Englishman holdeth argument againſt an Italian.

Italian.

13 Hich is more dangerous or deadly in fight of a blow or a thruſt?

Englishman.

This queſtion is not propounded according to art, becauſe there is no fight perfect without both blow and thruſt.

Italian.

Let it be ſo, yet opinions are otherwiſe holden, that the thruſt is onely to be vſed, becauſe it commeth a nearer way, and is more dangerous and deadly, for theſe reaſons: firſt the blow compaſſeth round like a wheele, but the thruſt paſſeth in a ſtraight line, therfore the blow by reaſon of the compaſſe, hath a longer way to go then the thruſt, & is therefore longer in doing, but the thruſt paſſeth in a ſtraight line, therfore hath ſhorter way to go thē hath the blow, & is therfore done in a ſhorter time, & is therfore much better then the blow, & more dangerous and deadly, becauſe if a thruſt do hit the face or bodie, it indangereth life, and moſt commonly death enſueth: but if the blow hit the bodie, it is not ſo dāgerous.

Englishman.

Englishman.

Let your opiniõs be what they wil, but that the thruſt cõmeth a nearer way, & is ſooner done then the blow, is not true: & for proofe thereof reade the twelfth Paradox. And now will I ſet downe probable reaſons, that the blow is better then the thruſt, and more dangerous and deadly. Firſt, the blow commeth as neare a way, & moſt cõmonly nearer then doth the thruſt, & is therfore done in a ſhorter time then is the thruſt: therfore in reſpect of time, wherupon ſtãdeth the perfection of fight, the blow is much better then the thruſt. Againe, the force of the thruſt paſſeth ſtraight, therefore any croſſe being indirectly made, the force of a child may put it by: but the force of a blow paſſeth indirectly, therefore muſt be directly warded in the counterchecke of his force: which cãnot be done but by the cõuenient ſtrength of a man, & with true croſſe in true time, or elſe wil not ſafely defẽd him: and is therfore much better, & more dãgerous thẽ the thruſt, and againe, the thruſt being made through the hand, arme, or leg, or in many places of the body and face, are not deadly, neither are they maimes, or loſſe of limmes or life, neither is he much hindred for the time in his fight, as long as the bloud is hot: for example.

The blow more dangerous then the thruſt.

I haue knowne a Gẽtlemã hurt in Rapier fight, in nine or ten places through the bodie, armes, and legges, and yet hath continued in his fight, & afterward hath ſlaine the other, and come home and hath bene cured of all his woũds without maime, & is yet liuing. But the blow being ſtrõgly made, taketh ſomtimes cleane away the hand from the arme, hath manie times bene ſeene. Againe, a full blow vpon the head or face with a ſhort ſharpe Sword, is moſt commonly death. A full blow vpon the

The blow cutteth off the hand, the arme, the leg, and ſometimes the head.

necke, ſhoulder, arme, or legge, indangereth life, cutteth off the veines, muſcles, and ſinewes, periſheth the bones: theſe wounds made by the blow, in reſpect of perfect healing, are the loſſe of limmes, or maimes incurable for euer.

And yet more for the blow: a ful blow vpon the head, face, arme, leg, or legs, is death, or the partie ſo wounded in the mercie of him that ſhall ſo wound him. For what man ſhall be able long in fight to ſtand vp, either to reuenge, or defend himſelfe, hauing the veines, muſcles, and ſinewes of his hand, arme, or leg cleane cut aſunder? or being diſmembred by ſuch wound vpon the face or head, but ſhall be enforced therby, and through the loſſe of bloud, the other a litle dallying with him, to yeeld himſelf, or leaue his life in his mercie?

He that giueth the firſt wound with a ſtrong blow, commaundeth the life of the other.

And for plainer deciding this cõtrouerſie betweene the blow and the thruſt, conſider this ſhort note. The blow commeth manie wayes, the thruſt doth not ſo. The blow commeth a nearer way then a thruſt moſt commonly, and is therefore ſooner done. The blow requireth the ſtrength of a man to be warded; but the thruſt may be put by, by the force of a child. A blow vpon the hand, arme, or legge is a maime incurable; but a thruſt in the hand, arme, or legge is to be recouered. The blow hath manie parts to wound, and in euerie of them commaundeth the life; but the thruſt hath but a few, as the bodie or face, and not in euerie part of them neither.

Of

Of the difference betwixt the true fight & the falſe: wherin conſiſteth (the Principles being had with the direction of the foure Gouernors) the whole perfection of fight with all maner of weapons.

THe true fights be theſe: whatſoeuer is done with the hand before the foot or feet is true fight. The falſe fights be theſe: whatſoeuer is done with the foot or feet before the hand, is falſe, becauſe the hand is ſwifter then the foot, the foot or feet being a ſlower mouer then the hand: the hand in that maner of fight is tied to the time of the foot or feet, and being tied thereto, hath loſt his freedome, and is made thereby as ſlow in his motions as the foot or feet: and therfore that fight is falſe. 14

Of euill orders or cuſtomes in our English Fẽce-ſchooles, & of the old or ancient teaching of weapons, & things very neceſſarie to be continued for the auoiding of errors, and reuiuing and continuance of our ancient weapons, and moſt victorious fight againe.

THere is in my opiniõ in our Fence-ſchooles an euill order or cuſtome in theſe dayes vſed, the which, if it might ſtand with the good liking of our Maiſters of Defence, I thinke it neceſſarie to be left: for as long as it is vſed, it ſhall be hard to make a good Scholler. 15

That is this, at the ſingle Sword, Sword and Dagger, & Sword and Buckler, they forbid the thruſt, & at the ſingle Rapier, and Rapier & Dagger, they forbid the blow. Either they are both together beſt, or the thruſt altogether beſt, or the blow altogether beſt. If the thruſt be beſt, why do we not vſe it at the ſingle Sword, Sword & Dagger, & Sword and Buckler. If the blow be beſt, why do we not vſe it at the ſingle Rapier, Rapier & Poinyard? But knowing by the Art of Armes, that no fight is perfect without both blow and thruſt, why do we not vſe and teach both blow and thruſt? But howſoeuer this we dayly ſee, that whē two meet in fight, whether they haue skill or none, vnleſſe ſuch as haue tied thēſelues to that boyiſh, *Italian*, weake, imperfect fight, they both ſtrike and thruſt, and how ſhall he then do, that being much taught in ſchoole, neuer learned to ſtrike, nor how to defend a ſtrong blow? & how ſhall he thē do, that being brought vp in Fēce-ſchoole, that neuer learned to thruſt with the ſingle Sword, Sword and Dagger, and Sword and Buckler, nor how at theſe weapōs to breake a thruſt? Surely, I thinke a downe right fellow, that neuer came in ſchoole, vſing ſuch skill as nature yeeldeth out of his courage, ſtrength, and agilitie, with good downe right blowes and thruſts among, as ſhall beſt frame in his hands, ſhold put one of theſe imperfect ſchollers greatly to his ſhifts. Beſides, there are now in theſe dayes no gripes, cloſes, wreſtlings, ſtriking with the hilts, daggers, or bucklers, vſed in Fence-ſchooles. Our ploughmen by nature wil do all theſe things with great ſtrēgth & agility: but the Schooleman is altogether vnacquainted with theſe things. He being faſt tyed to ſuch ſchoolplay as he hath learned, hath loſt thereby the benefite

of

of nature, and the plowman is now by nature without art a farre better man then he. Therefore in my opinion, as long as we barre anie maner of play in ſchoole, we ſhall hardly make a good ſcholler: there is no maner of teaching comparable to the old ancient teaching, that is, firſt their quarters, then their wardes, blowes, thruſts, and breaking of thruſtes, then their Cloſes and Gripes, ſtriking with the hilts, Daggers, Bucklers, Wraſtlings, ſtriking with the foote or knee in the Coddes, and all theſe are ſafely defended in learning perfectly of the Gripes. And this is the ancient teaching, the perfecteſt & moſt beſt teaching; and without this teaching, there ſhall neuer ſcholler be made able, doe his vttermoſt, nor fight ſafe. Againe their ſwordes in ſchooles are too long by almoſt halfe a foote to vncroſſe, without going backe with the feete, within diſtance or perfectly to ſtrike or thruſt within the halfe or quarter ſword. And in ſeruing of the Prince, when men do meet together in publique fight, are vtterly naught and vnſeruiceable. The beſt lengthes for perfect teaching of the true fight to be vſed and continued in Fence ſchooles, to accord with the true ſtatures of all men, are theſe. The blade to be a yard and an inch for meane ſtatures, and for men of tall ſtatures, a yard and three or foure inches, and no more. And I would haue the Rapier continued in ſchooles, alwaies readie for ſuch as ſhall thinke themſelues cunning, or ſhall haue delight to play with that imperfect weapon. Prouided alwaies, that the Schoolemaiſter or Vſher play with him with his ſhort Sword, plying him with all maner of fight according to the true art: this being continued the truth ſhall flouriſh, the lye ſhalbe beaten downe, and all nations not ha-

In the warres there is no obſeruation of Stoccatas, Imbroccatas, times, nor answers.

Long weapons imperfect.

uing the true ſcience, ſhall come with all gladneſſe to the valiant and moſt braue Engliſh maiſters of Defence to learne the true fight for their defence.

The grounds or Principles of true fight with all maner of weapons.

16 FIrſt Iudgement, Lyings, Diſtance, Direction, Paſe, Space, Place, Time, Indirection, Motion, Action, generall and continuall Motion, Progreſſion, Regreſſion, Trauerſing, and Treading of groundes, Blowes, Thruſtes, Faulſes, Doubles, Slipes, Wardes, breakings of Thruſts, Cloſings, Gripes, & Wraſtlings, Guardant fight, Open fight, Variable fight, and Cloſe fight, and foure Gouernours.

The wardes of all maner of weapons.

17 ALl ſingle weapons haue foure wardes, and all double weapons haue eight wardes. The ſingle ſword hath two with the point vp, and two with the point downe. The Staffe and all maner of weapons to be vſed with both handes haue the like.

The Sword and Buckler, and Sword and Dagger are double weapons, and haue eight wardes, two with the point vp, and two with the point downe, and two for the legges with the point downe, the point to be caried for both ſides of the legges, with the knuckles downeward, and two wardes with the Dagger or Buckler for the head. The Forreſt bill is a double weapon by reaſon of

of the head, and therefore hath eight wardes, foure with the Staffe, foure with the head, foure of them to be vſed as with the ſtaffe, and the other foure with the head, the one vp, the other downe, and the other ſidewaies.

The names and numbers of times appertaining vnto fight both true and falſe.

THere are eight times, whereof foure are true, and foure are falſe: the true times be theſe. 18

The time of the hand.
The time of the hand and bodie.
The time of the hand, bodie and foote.
The time of the hand, bodie and feete.

The falſe times be theſe.

The time of the foote.
The time of the foote and bodie.
The time of the foote, bodie and hand.
The time of the feete, bodie and hand.

Thus haue I thought good to ſeparate and make knowne the true times from the falſe, with the true wardes thereto belonging, that thereby the rather in practiſing of weapons, a true courſe may be taken for the auoiding of errours and euill cuſtomes, and ſpeedie attaining of good habit or perfect being in the true vſe and knowledge of all maner of weapons.

Of the length of weapons, and how euerie man may fit himſelfe in the perfect length of his weapon, according to his owne ſtature, with briefe reaſons wherefore they ought to be ſo.

19 TO know the perfect length of your Sword, you ſhall ſtand with your ſword and dagger drawn, as you ſee this picture, keeping out ſtraight your dagger arme, drawing backe your ſword as far as conueniently you can, not opening the elbow ioynt of your ſword arme: and looke what you can draw within your dagger, that is the iuſt length of your ſword, to be made according to your owne ſtature.

If the ſword be longer, you can hardly vncroſſe without going backe with your feet. If ſhorter, thē you can hardly make a true croſſe without putting in of your feet, the which times are too long to anſwer the time of the hand.

The like reaſons for the ſhort ſtaffe, half Pike, Forreſt bill, Partiſan, or Gleue, or ſuch like weapons of perfect length.

AS I haue here made a figuratiue demonſtration, to know the perfect length of the Sword, as afore is ſayd; ſo haue I in the page following, for the plainer vnderſtanding of the Reader, ſet foorth a forme of ſtanding, to know the lengths of the ſhort Staffe, halfe Pike, Foreſt Bill, Partiſan and Gleue, or ſuch like weapons of aduantage, as ſhall alſo beſt fit the ſtatures of all men.

The perfect length of your two hand ſword is, the blade to be the length of the blade of your ſingle ſword.

To know the perfect length of your ſhort ſtaffe, or half Pike, Forreſt bil, Partiſan, or Gleue, or ſuch like weapons of vantage and perfect lengths, you ſhall ſtand vpright, holding the ſtaffe vpright cloſe by your body, with your left hād, reaching with your right hand your ſtaffe as high as you can, and then allow to that length a ſpace to ſet both your hands, when you come to fight, wherein you may conueniently ſtrike, thruſt, and ward, & that is the iuſt length to be made according to your ſtature. And this note, that theſe lengths will commonly fall out to be eight or nine foot long, and will fit, although not inſt, the ſtatures of all men, without any hindrance at all vnto them in their fight, becauſe in any weapon wherin the hands may be remoued, and at libertie, to make the weapon lōger or ſhorter in fight at his pleaſure, a foot of the ſtaffe behind the backmoſt hand doth no harme. And wherfore theſe weapons ought to be of the lengths aforeſaid, and no ſhorter, theſe are the reaſons: If they ſhould be ſhorter, then the long ſtaffe, Morris Pike, and ſuch like weapons ouer and aboue the perfect length, ſhould haue great vantage againſt them, becauſe he may come boldly and ſafe without anie gard or ward, to the place where he may thruſt home, and at euery thruſt put him in danger of his life: but if theſe weapons be of their perfect lengths, then can the long ſtaffe, the Morris Pike, or anie other longer weapon ly no where in true ſpace, but ſhall be ſtill within compaſſe of the croſſe, to croſſe and vncroſſe, wherby he may ſafely paſſe home to the place, where he may ſtrike or thruſt him that hath the long weapon, in the head, face, or body at his pleaſure.

Of the lengths of the Battel-axe, Halbard, or blacke Bill, or ſuch like vveapons of weight, appertaining vnto gard or battell.

20 IN anie of theſe weapons there needeth no iuſt length, but commonly they are, or ought to be fiue or ſixe foot long, & may not well be vſed much longer, becauſe of their weights: and being weapons for the warres or battell, when men are ioyned cloſe together, may thruſt, & ſtrike ſound blowes, with great force both ſtrong and quicke: and finally for the iuſt lengths of all other ſhorter or longer weapons to be gouerned with both hands, there is none: neither is there anie certaine lengthes in anie maner of weapons to be vſed with one hand, ouer or vnder the iuſt length of the ſingle ſword.

Thus endeth the length of weapons.

Of the vantages of weapons in their kinds, places, & times, both in priuate and publike fight.

21 FIrſt I will begin with the worſt weapon, an imperfect and inſufficient weapon, and not worth the ſpeaking of; but now being highly eſteemed, therefore not to be left vnremembred; that is, the ſingle Rapier, and Rapier and Poiniard.

The ſingle Sword hath the vantage againſt the ſingle Rapier.

The Sword and Dagger hath the vantage againſt the Rapier and Poiniard.

The

The Sword & Target hath aduãtage againſt the Sword and Dagger, or Rapier and Poiniard.

The Sword and Buckler hath aduantage againſt the Sword and Target, the Sword and Dagger, or Rapier and Poiniard.

The two hand Sword, hath the vantage againſt the Sword and Target, the Sword and Buckler, the Sword and Dagger, or Rapier and Poiniard.

The Battel-axe, the Halbard, the Blacke-bill, or ſuch like weapons of weight, appertaining vnto guard or battell, are all one in fight, and haue aduantage againſt the two hand Sword, the Sword and Buckler, the Sword and Target, the Sword & dagger, or the Rapier & Poiniard.

The ſhort ſtaffe or halfe Pike, Forreſt-bill, Partiſan, or Gleue, or ſuch like weapons of perfect length, haue the vantage againſt the Battel-axe, the Halbard, the Blacke-bill, the two hand ſword, the Sword and Target, and are too hard for two Swords and Daggers, or two Rapiers and Poiniards with Gantlets, and for the long ſtaffe and Morris Pike.

The long Staffe, Morris Pike, or Iauelin, or ſuch like weapons aboue the perfect length, haue aduantage againſt all maner of weapons, the ſhort ſtaffe, Welch hooke, Partiſan, or Gleue, or ſuch like weapons of vantage excepted: yet too weake for two Swords and Daggers or two Swords and Bucklers, or two Rapiers and Poiniards with Gantlets, becauſe they are too long to thruſt, ſtrike, and turne ſpeedily: and by reaſon of the large diſtance, one of the Sword and Dagger-men will get behind him.

The Welch hooke or Forreſt bill, hath aduantage againſt all maner of weapons whatſoeuer.

Yet vnderſtand, that in battels, and where varietie of weapons be, amongſt multitudes of men and horſes, the Sword and Target, the two hand Sword, the Battel-axe, the Blacke-bill, and Halbard, are better weapons, and more dangerous in their offence and forces, then is the Sword and Buckler, ſhort ſtaffe, long ſtaffe, or Forreſt bill. The Sword and Target leadeth vpon Shot, and in troupes defendeth thruſts and blowes giuen by battel-axe, Halbards, Blacke-bill, or two hand ſwords, far better then can the Sword and Buckler.

The Morris Pike defendeth the battell from both horſe and man, much better then can the ſhort ſtaffe, long ſtaffe, or Forreſt bill. Againe, the Battel-axe, the Halbard, the Blacke bill, the two hand ſword, and Sword & Target, amongſt armed men and troopes, when men are come together, by reaſon of their weights, ſhortneſſe, and great forces, do much more offend the enemie, & are then much better weapons, then is the ſhort ſtaffe, the long Staffe, or Forreſt bill.

Of the inſufficiencie and diſaduantages of the Rapiers-fight in Battell.

22 FOr the ſingle Rapier, or Rapier & Poiniard, they are imperfect & inſufficient weapons: and eſpecially in the ſeruice of the Prince, when men ſhall ioyne together, what ſeruice can a ſouldier do with a Rapier, a childiſh toy wherwith a man can do nothing but thruſt, nor that neither, by reaſon of the length, and in euerie mouing when blowes are a dealing, for lacke of a hilt is in daunger to haue his hand or arme cut off, or his head clouen?

clouen. And for Wardes and Gripes, they haue none, neither can any of theſe fine Rapier men, for lacke of vſe, tell howe to ſtrike a ſound blow.

Of the vantages and ſufficiencie of the short Sword fight in battell.

THe ſhort Sword, and Sword and Dagger, 23
are perfect good weapons, and eſpecially in ſeruice of the Prince. What a braue weapon is a ſhort ſharpe light Sword, to carie, to draw, to be nimble withall, to ſtrike, to cut, to thruſt both ſtrong and quicke. And what a goodly defence is a ſtrong ſingle hilt, when men are cluſtering and hurling together, eſpecially where varietie of weapons be, in their motions to defend the hand, head, face, and bodies, from blowes, that ſhalbe giuen ſometimes with Swordes, ſometimes with two handed Swordes, battell Axe, Halbardes, or blacke Billes, and ſometimes men ſhalbe ſo neare together, that they ſhall haue no ſpace, ſcarce to vſe the blades of their Swordes belowe their waſtes, then their hilts (their handes being aloft) defendeth from the blowes, their handes, armes, heads, faces, and bodies: then they lay on, hauing the vſe of blowes and Gripes, by force of their armes with their hilts, ſtrong blowes, at the head, face, armes, bodies, and ſhoulders, and manie times in hurling together, ſcope is giuen to turne downe their points, with violent thruſts at their faces, and bodies, by reaſon of the ſhortneſſe of their blades, to the mightie annoyance, diſcomfort, and great deſtruction of their enimies. One valiant man with a Sword in his hand, will doe better ſeruice, then ten *Italians*, or Italienated with the Rapiers.

That all maner of double weapons, or weapons to be vſed with both handes, haue aduantage againſt the ſingle Rapier or ſingle Sword, there is no queſtion to be made.

That the Sword and Buckler hath the vantage againſt the Sword and Dagger.

34 THe Dagger is an imperfect ward, although borne out ſtraight, to make the Space narrow, whereby by a litle mouing of the hand, may be ſufficient to ſaue both ſides of the head, or to breake the thruſt from the face or body, yet for lacke of the circumference his hand will lie too high or too low, or too weake, to defend both blow and thruſt: if he lye ſtraight with narrow ſpace, which is beſt to breake the thruſt, then he lieth too weake, and too lowe to defend his head from a ſtrong blow: if he lye high, that is ſtrong to defend his head, but then his ſpace wilbe too wide to breake the thruſt from his bodie. The Dagger ſerueth well at length to put by a thruſt, and at the halfe Sword to croſſe the Sword blade, to driue out the Agent, and put him in danger of his life, and ſafely in anie of theſe two actions to defend himſelfe. But the Buckler, by reaſon of his circumference and weight, being well caried, defendeth ſafely in all times and places, whether it be at the point, halfe Sword, the head, bodie, and face, from all maner of blowes and thruſtes whatſoeuer, yet I haue heard manie hold opinion, that the Sword and Dagger hath aduantage of the Sword and Buckler, at the Cloſe, by reaſon of the length and point of the Dagger: and at the

point

point of the Sword, they can better ſee to ward then with a Buckler. But I neuer knew anie, that wanne the Cloſe with the Dagger vpon the Sword and Budkler, but did wiſh himſelfe out againe: for diſtance being broken, iudgement faileth, for lacke of time to iudge, and the eie is deceiued by the ſwift motion of the hand, and for lacke of true Space with the dagger hand, which cannot be otherwiſe, for lacke of the circumference to defend both blow and thruſt, it is impoſſible for lacke of true Space in iuſt time, the agent hauing gotten the true place, to defend one thruſt or blow of an hundred. And it is moſt certaine, whoſoeuer cloſeth with Sword and Dagger, againſt the Sword and Buckler, is in great danger to be ſlaine. Likewiſe at the point within diſtance, if he ſtand to defend both blow and thruſt with his Dagger, for lacke of true ſpace and diſtance, if he had the beſt eye of anie man, and could ſee perfectly, which way the thruſt or blow commeth, and when it commeth, as it is not to be denied but he may, yet his ſpace being too large, it helpeth him nothing, becauſe one mans hand being as ſwift as another mans hand, both being within diſtance, he that ſtriketh or thruſteth, hurteth the warder: the reaſon is this: the Agent being in the firſt motion although in his offence, further to go then the warder to defend, yet the warders ſpace being too large, the blow or thruſt wilbe performed home, before the warder can come to the true plaee to defend himſelfe, and although the warder doe perfectly ſee the blow or thruſt comming, ſo ſhall he ſee his owne ward ſo farre from the true place of his defence, that although he doe at that inſtant time, plainly ſee the blow or thruſt comming, it ſhalbe impoſſible for him to recouer the

true place of his ward, till he be wounded. But let the warder with the dagger ſay, that it is not true which I haue ſaid, for as he hath eſes to behold the blow or thruſt cõming, ſo hath he as good time to defend himſelf. Herein he ſhal find himſelf deceiued to; this is the reaſon: the hand is the ſwifteſt motion, the foot is the ſloweſt, without diſtance the hand is tied to the motion of the feet, wherby the time of the hand is made as ſlow as the foot, becauſe thereby we redeeme euerie time loſt vpon his comming by the ſlow motion of the foot, & haue time therby to iudge, whẽ & how he can performe any actiõ whatſoeuer, and ſo haue we the time of the hand to the time of the feet. Now is the hãd in his owne courſe more ſwifter then the foot or eye, therfore within diſtance the eye is deceiued, & iudgement is loſt; and that is another cauſe that the warder with the dagger, although he haue perfect eyes, is ſtil within diſtance deceiued. For proofe that the hand is more ſwifter then the eye, & thereby deceiueth the eyes: let two ſtand within diſtance, & let one of thẽ ſtand ſtill to defend himſelf, & let the other floriſh & falſe with his hand, and he ſhall continually with the ſwift motions of his hand, deceiue the eyes of him that ſtandeth watching to defend himſelfe, & ſhal continually ſtrike him in diuerſe places with his hand. Againe, take this for an example, that the eyes by ſwift motions are deceiued: turne a turne-wheele ſwift, & you ſhall not be able to diſcerne with your beſt eies how many ſpokes be in the wheele, no nor whether there be any ſpokes at all, or whereof the wheele is made, and yet you ſee when the wheele ſtandeth ſtill there is a large diſtance betweene euerie ſpoke. He that will not beleeue that the ſwift motion of the hand in fight will deceiue the eye, ſhal ſtare abroad

The eye is deceiued by the ſwift motion of the hãd.

broad with his eyes, & feele himſelf ſoundly hurt, before he ſhall perfectly ſee how to defend himſelfe. So thoſe that truſt to their ſight, the excellẽcy of a good eye, their great cunning, & perfect wards of the daggers, that they can better ſee to ward then with a buckler, ſhall euer be deceiued. And whẽ they be wounded, they ſay the Agẽt was a litle too quicke for them; ſometimes they ſay they bare their dagger a litle too low: ſometimes they are thruſt vnder the dagger, then they ſay, they bare it a litle too high: ſometimes a thruſt being ſtrongly made, they being ſoundly paid therewith, ſay, they were a litle too ſlow, & ſometimes they be ſoundly paid with a thruſt, & they thinke they were a litle too quick. So they that practiſe or thinke to be cunning in the dagger ward, are all the dayes of their liues learning, and are neuer taught.

The Dagger is an imperfect ward.

That the Sword and Buckler hath the vantage againſt the Sword and Target.

THe Sword & Target together hath but two fights; that is, the variable fight, & the cloſe fight, for the cloſe fight, the nũber of his feet are too many to take againſt any mã of skill hauing the Sword & buckler, & for the variable fight although not ſo many in number, yet too many to win the place with his foot to ſtrike or thruſt home. The ſword & buckler-man can out of his variable, opẽ & gardãt fight, come brauely off & on, falſe and double, ſtrike & thruſt home, & make a true croſſe vpon euery occaſion at his pleaſure: if the Sword & Target mã will flie to his gardãt fight, the bredth of his Target will not ſuffer it, if to his open fight, thẽ hath the Sword & Buckler man in effect the ſword and Buckler to the ſingle, for in that fight by reaſon of the bredth, the target can do litle good or none at all. 25

The short Staffe.

26 NOw for the vantage of the ſhort Staffe againſt the Sword and Buckler, Sword & Target, two hand ſword, ſingle Sword, Sword and Dagger, or Rapier and Poniard, there is no great queſtion to be made in anie of theſe weapons: whenſoeuer anie blow or thruſt ſhall be ſtrongly made with the ſtaffe, they are euer in falſe place, in the cariage of the wards, for if at any of theſe ſixe weapons he carie his ward high & ſtrõg for his head, as of neceſſitie he muſt carie it verie high, otherwiſe it will be too weake to defend a blow being ſtrongly made at the head, then will his ſpace be too wide, in due time to breake the thruſt from his bodie. Againe, if he carie his ward lower, thereby to be in equall ſpace for readineſſe to breake both blow & thruſt, then in that place his ward is too low, and too weake to defend the blow of the ſtaffe: for the blow being ſtrongly made at the head vpon that ward, will beate downe the ward and his head together, and put him in great danger of his life. And here is to be noted, that if he fight well, the ſtaffe-man neuer ſtriketh but at the head, and thruſteth preſently vnder at the body: and if a blow be firſt made, a thruſt followeth; & if a thruſt be firſt made, a blow followeth; and in doing of any of them, the one breedeth the other: ſo that howſoeuer anie of theſe ſixe weapons ſhall carie his ward ſtrongly to defend the firſt, he ſhall be too farre in ſpace to defend the ſecond, whether it be blow or thruſt.

Yet againe for the ſhort ſtaffe: the ſhort ſtaffe hath the vantage againſt the Battel-axe, blacke-bill, or Halbard,

bard: the ſhort ſtaffe hath the vantage, by reaſon of the nimbleneſſe and length: he will ſtrike and thruſt freely, and in better and ſwifter time then can the Battel-axe, Blacke-bill, or Halbard: and by reaſon of his iudgement, diſtance and time, fight ſafe. And this reſolue vpon, the ſhort ſtaffe is the beſt weapon againſt all maner of weapons, the Forreſt bill excepted.

The ſhort ſtaffe or half Pike hath the aduantage againſt two ſword and dagger men, or two Rapiers. Poiniards, and Gantlets.

Alſo the ſhort ſtaffe hath aduantage againſt two Swords and Daggers, or two Rapiers, Poiniards and Gantlets, the reaſons and cauſes before are for the moſt part ſet downe already, the which being well conſidered, you ſhall plainely ſee, that whenſoeuer anie one of the Sword & Dagger men, or Rapier and Poiniard men ſhall breake his diſtance, or ſuffer the Staffe-man to breake his, that man which did firſt breake his diſtãce, or ſuffer the diſtance to be won againſt him, is preſently in danger of death. And this cãnot in reaſon be denied, becauſe the diſtance appertaining to the Staffe-man, either to keepe or breake, ſtandeth vpon the mouing of one large ſpace alwayes at the moſt, both for his offence or ſafety. The other two in the breach of their diſtance to offend the Staffe-man, haue alwayes foure paces at the leaſt therin they fall too great in number with their feet, and too ſhort in diſtance to offend the Staffe-man. Now there reſteth no more to be ſpoken of, but how the Staffe-man ſhall behaue himſelf to keepe that diſtance, that one of the Sword & Dagger men get not behind him, while the other ſhal buſie him before: to do that is very eaſie, by reaſon of the ſmal nũber of his feet, for by a verie ſmall turning of his feet, as it were in the Center point of a wheele, the other two to keepe their diſtance, are driuen to runne twentie foote for one, as it

were vpon the vttermoſt part or circle of the wheele: all this while the Staffe-man is verie well. Then it commeth thus to paſſe, whether they both labour to get behind him, or one keepe directly before him whileſt the other get behind him, yet before that be brought to paſſe, they ſhal either be both before him or iuſt againſt both ſides of him: at which time ſoeuer the Staffe-man finding either of them within diſtance, he preſently in making of his play, ſlayeth with blow or thruſt one of thē, or at the leaſt putteth him in great danger of his life. If the Staffe-man take his time, when they are both before him, that is to ſay, before they come to the half ring, iuſt againſt both ſides of the Staffe-man, then he that is neareſt within diſtance is ſlain by blow or thruſt, or put in great danger of his life. But if the Sword and Dagger men do keepe their diſtance vntill they come to the iuſt halfe ring right againſt the ſides of the Staffe-man, and then breake diſtance, that man that firſt breaketh diſtance is ſlaine with blow or thruſt, or ſore hurt, and in great danger of death: and the Staffe-man in making that play at that inſtant, muſt turne with one large pace, the which he may eaſily do, before the other can get neare enough to offend him, by reaſon that he hath to make with his feet but one large pace, but the other hath at the leaſt three paces. But if the Sword and Dagger-men will in the time that they be before him, keep their diſtance in the time of their being vpon the middle part of the outſide of the circle, right againſt both ſides of him, & will labor with all heed & diligence to be both or one of thē behind him, that troubleth the Staffe-man nothing at all, for in that very time, when he findeth them paſt the middle part of the circle, he preſently

ſently turneth, by the which he ſhall naturally ſet himſelfe as it were in a triangle, and both the ſword and dagger-men, ſhall thereby ſtand both before him in true diſtance of three paces, from offending of him at the leaſt, as at the firſt they did. And take this for a true ground, there is no man able to ward a ſound blow with the Sword and Dagger, nor Rapier, Poinyard, and Gantlet, being ſtrongly made at the head, with the Staffe, and run in withall, the force of both handes is ſuch, being in his full motion and courſe, that although the other do carie his ward high and ſtrong with both handes, yet his feete being mouing from the ground, the great force of the blow will ſtrike him with his ward, and all downe flat to ground. But if he ſtand faſt with his feete, he may with both weapons together, ſtrongly defend his head from the blow, but then you are ſufficiently inſtructed, the thruſt being preſently made, after the blow full at the bodie, it is impoſſible in due time to breake it, by reaſon of the largeneſſe of his ſpace.

The ſhort Staffe hath the vantage againſt the long ſtaffe, and Morris Pike, and the Forreſt bill againſt all maner of weapons.

THe reaſons are theſe. The ſhort Staffe 27
hath the vantage of the long Staffe and Morris Pike in his ſtrength & narrownes of ſpace in his foure wardes of defence. And the Forreſt bill hath the vantage of all maner of weapons in his ſtrength and narrownes of ſpace in his eight wardes of defence: and the rather becauſe the Bill hath two wardes for one againſt the Staffe

or Morris Pike, that is to ſay, foure with the Staffe, and foure with the head, and is more offenſiue then is the Staffe or Morris Pike: yet a queſtiō may be made by the vnskilfull, concerning the fight between the long Staffe and the ſhort, in this ſort: Why ſhould not the long Staffe haue aduantage againſt ſhort Staffe, ſince that the long Staffe-man, being at libertie with his handes, may make his long Staffe both long and ſhort for his beſt aduantage, when he ſhall thinke it good, and therefore when he ſhall find himſelfe ouermatched in the length of his Staffe, by the ſtrength of the ſhort Staffe, and narrowneſſe of ſpace in his foure wardes of defence, he can preſently by drawing backe of his Staffe in his handes, make his Staffe as ſhort as the others, and ſo be readie to fight with him at his owne length. To this I anſwere, that when the long Staffe-man is driuen there to lye, the length of his Staffe that will lye behind him, will hinder him to ſtrike, thruſt, ward, or goe backe in due time. Neither can he turne the contrarie end of his Staffe to keepe out the ſhort Staffe man from the Cloſe, nor ſafely to defend himſelfe at his comming in.

A queſtion.

Anſwere.

Againe of the vantages of weapons.

28 TAke this for a general rule, all long Staues, Morris Pikes, Forreſt bils, Iauelins, or ſuch like long weapons, of what ſort ſoeuer, being aboue the true lengthes, the ſhorteſt haue the aduantage, becauſe they can croſſe and vncroſſe in ſhorter time then can the longer: and all maner of ſhort weapons to be vſed with both handes, as ſtaues, and ſuch like, being vnder the perfect lengthes, the

the longeſt haue the aduantage, and all maner of weapons to be vſed with one hand, that are aboue the perfect length of the ſingle Sword, the ſhorteſt haue the vantage, and all maner of weapons vnder the iuſt length of the ſhort Sword, as Fauchions, Skaines, or Hangers, Woodkniues, Daggers, and ſuch like ſhort weapons of imperfect lengthes, the longeſt haue the aduantage, becauſe the fight of theſe weapons conſiſt within the halfe or quarter Sword, wherein by the ſwift motions of their handes, their eyes are deceiued, and in thoſe weapons, commonly for their handes lieth no defence. And if two ſhall fight with ſtaues or Swordes, or what weapons ſoeuer, the one of them hauing his weapon longer then the perfect length, and the other his weapon ſhorter then the perfect length, he that hath the longeſt hath the vantage, becauſe the ſhorteſt can make no true Croſſe in true time. The ſhort Staffe or halfe Pike, Forreſt bill, Partiſan, or Gleue, or ſuch like weapons of perfect length, to be vſed with both handes, haue the aduantage againſt two Swordes and Daggers, or two Rapiers, Poiniardes, and Gantlets, and againſt all other weapons whatſoeuer, the Forreſt bill excepted.

Againe for the short Staffe or halfe Pike.

THe ſhort Staffe is moſt commonly the beſt weapon of all other, although other weapons may be more offenſiue, and eſpecially againſt manie weapons together, by reaſon of his nimbleneſſe and ſwift motions, and is not much inferiour to the Forreſt bill, although the Forreſt bill be more offenſiue, and hath more wardes, becauſe 29

the Staffe is verie vncertaine, but the Bill is a more certaine marke, by reaſon of the breadth of the head, wherby as the Bill hath aduantage in his wardes in the head, ſo therefore hath the Staffe the like defence, or rather more, to play vpon the head of the Bill, not onely to make a perfect good ward, but thereby, the rather to caſt the Bill out of the right line, whereby the Staffe-man may thruſt ſafe, and endanger the Bill-man: and the ratherbecauſe therein he is the firſt mouer, wherin there is great vantage, both in time and force. And if the Bilman be not very skilfull (all vantages and diſaduantages of both ſides conſidered,) the ſhort Staffe will proue the better weapon. Laſtly note this, that long Staues, Morris Pikes, and ſuch like weapons of imperfect lengthes, being to be vſed with both hands, notwithſtanding their imperfect lengthes, are perfect weapons to be vſed, the one againſt the other, and their fightes therein perfect, becauſe in drawing of them backe betwixt their handes, their motions are ſwifter backewardes, then is the time of the Agents feet forwardes, by the which all their loſt times are redeemed: therefore theſe weapons in their fightes, the one againſt the other are perfect. And theſe weapons in the night are the beſt weapons of all other, and haue great aduantage againſt the forreſt Bill, ſhort Staffe, or anie maner of ſhort weapons whatſoeuer: for theſe cauſes, they boldly make home their fightes, and if neede be againſt deſperate men, that will venture themſelues to run in, they redeem[illegible] heir loſt times. But the other with ſhorter weapons f[illegible] lacke of light, can make no true defence. Thus endeth he vantages of weapons.

Note this.

Queſtions

Queſtions and anſwers betweene the Scholler and the Maiſter, of the vantages and diſaduantages betweene a tall man, and a man of meane ſtature, hauing both the perfect knowledge in their weapons.

Scholler.

WHo hath the aduantage in fight, of a tall man, or a man of meane ſtature?

Maiſter.

The tall man hath the vantage, for theſe cauſes: his reach being longer, and weapon vnto his ſtature accordingly, he hath thereby a ſhorter courſe with his feet to win the true place, wherin by the ſwift motion of his hand, he may ſtrike or thruſt home: in the which time a man of meane ſtature cannot reach him, & by his large pace, in his true pace in his regreſſion further, ſetteth himſelf out of all danger, & theſe are the vantages that a tall man hath againſt anie man of ſhorter reach then himſelfe.

Tall men haue the vantage againſt men of meane ſtature.

Scholler.

What vantage hath a man of meane ſtature againſt a tall man?

Maiſter.

He hath none: becauſe the true times in fight, and actions accordingly, are to be obſerued and done, as well by a tall man, as by a man of meane ſtature.

Scholler.

Why then if this be true, that tall men haue the vantage againſt mẽ of meane ſtature, it ſhold ſeeme in fight

there is no perfection, other then this, when men of like ſtature, reach, & length of weapon, ſhall fight together, the which will ſeldome or neuer happen, but either in the length of their weapons, ſtatures or reaches (if their ſwords ſhould be of iuſt length) ſome difference moſt commonly there will be in their reaches.

Maiſter.

Yes verily, the tall man hath ſtill the vantage, and yet the fight is perfect, although the men that ſhall happen to fight, ſhall happē to be vnequall in their ſtatures, reaches, or lengths of their weapons.

Scholler.

That can I hardly beleeue, vnleſſe you can tell me by Art how to auoid or ſafely defend my ſelfe, being but a man of meane ſtature, againſt a tall man.

Maiſter.

I will tell you: there belongeth vnto this Art of defence onely to be vſed with the feet, progreſſion, regreſſion, trauerſing, and treading of grounds: in any of theſe you playing the part of the Patient, or Patient Agent, your feete are ſwifter in their motions then are the Agents, becauſe his weight and number of his feet in his comming to win the true place to ſtrike or thruſt home, are greater then yours, and therefore the true time is yours to auoid him, or ſafely to defend your ſelfe: ſo the Art is ſtill true, and the tall man hath ſtill the vantage.

Scholler.

Yet I am not fully ſatisfied herein, becauſe you tell me ſtill that the tall man hath the vantage, and notwithſtanding you ſay the Art is true, wherein then hath the tall man the vantage, when by your Art you can defend your ſelfe againſt him.

Maiſter.

Maiſter.

I will ſatisfie you therein thus. The tall man hath the vantage, he can maintaine his fight, both by nature and Art, with more eaſe then can the man of meane ſtature, becauſe the man of meane ſtature hath thereby a further courſe with his feete to paſſe to the place, wherein he may ſtrike or thruſt home, and in winning of that place, is driuen by Art to come garded vnder his wards to defend himſelfe, becauſe in the time of his comming, the tall man may both naturally or artificially ſtrike or thruſt home, in the which time, if the mā of meane ſtature ſhould faile in the leaſt iote of his Art, he ſhould be in great daunger of death or hurt. But the tall man can naturally and ſafely come to the true place open, without any artificiall wards at all, and therein alſo endanger the other, or driue him ſtill to trauerſe his ground, with all the artificiall skill that he hath to defend himſelfe; and all this the tall man doth by reaſon of his length of weapon, large pace, ſhort courſe, and long reach, with great ſafetie, pleaſure and eaſe. And for thoſe cauſes the tall man hath ſtill the vantage of men of meane ſtature, and yet notwitſtāding the noble Science of Defence moſt perfect and good.

Foure inuincible aduantages conſiſt in a tall man againſt a man of meane ſtature.
Long reach.
Short courſe.
Length of weapō.
Large pace.

Of the long ſingle Rapier fight betweene valiant men, hauing both skill, he that is the beſt wraſtler, or if neither of them can wraſtle, the ſtrongeſt man moſt commonly killeth the other, or leaueth him at his mercie.

WHen two valiant men of skill at ſingle Rapier do fight, one or both of them moſt cōmonly ſtanding vpon their ſtrength or skill in wraſtling, will preſently ſeeke to run into 31

the cloſe; but hauing both skill, not without ſpeciall care of their gard or croſſe, the which they may ſafely do, by reaſon of the length of their Rapiers: but hapning both of one mind, the rather do bring themſelues together: that being done, no skil with Rapiers auaileth, they preſently grapple faſt their hilts, wriſts, armes, bodies or neckes, as in luſtring, wraſtling, or ſtriuing together, they may beſt find for their aduantages: wherby it moſt commonly falleth out, that he that is the beſt wraſtler, or ſtrongeſt man (if neither of them can wraſtle) ouercommeth, wreſting by ſtrength, or fine skill in wraſtling, the Rapier from his aduerſarie, or caſting him frō him, either to the ground, or to ſuch diſtance, that he may by reaſon therof, vſe the edge or point of his rapier, to ſtrike or thruſt him, leauing him dead or aliue at his mercie. But if but one of theſe valiant men ſhall ſeeke to run into the cloſe, and that the other ſhall vſe his skill in trauerſing of his ground, or otherwiſe by ſtanding vpon his gard or *Stocata* ward, to take all maner of aduātages at his cōming, yet all auaileth him not, becauſe the Rapiers being long, the croſſing of the blades cannot be auoided: that being made, the oppreſſor runneth faſter forwards then can the defendant backwards, and ſo are brought together, as in the firſt aſſault they were, & euerie action therein accordingly performed.

Of the Rapier and Poiniard-fight betwixt valiant men hauing both skill.

32 IF two valiant men do fight at Rapier and Poiniard hauing both skill, one or both of them will preſently preſſe hard to winne the place, wherein in his iudgement he may thruſt home. If both be

be of one mind, the time is doubled in winning the ſame: whereby it commeth to paſſe, that then he that firſt thruſteth, endangereth, killeth or hurteth the other: and if they both thruſt together, as they may do by the equall time of their feet, then they are moſt commonly both ſlaine, or both hurt. And this is well knowne vnto all men of skill, that the place being once gotten, there is neither iudgement, ſpace, pace, nor time, either by wards with their Rapier blades, or by breaking with their Poiniards, or flying backe, that can preſerue or defend them. But if but one of them will ſeeke to win by paſſage, hard preſſing, or otherwiſe the place, wherin in his iudgement he may thruſt home, it is impoſſible for the other to denie him the ſame, becauſe the length of the Rapiers winneth him the croſſe; the croſſe being taken, the place is had; the place being had, he that firſt thruſteth, firſt ſpeedeth: if both thruſt together, they are both in danger: thē preſently followeth (vnleſſe it pleaſe God otherwiſe to haue it) the ſtabs with their daggers, wherein there lieth no defence.

Of the long Rapier & Poiniard-fight betweene two valiant men, the one hauing skil, the other none: that he that hath no skill hath the vantage.

Hen two valiant men ſhal fight with lōg Rapiers and Poiniards, the one hauing skill, and the other none, he that hath no skill moſt commōly proueth himſelf the better mā, for theſe cauſes or reaſons following. Firſt the skilfull man as knowing the other to haue no skill, or finding it to be ſo by his ſhape or 33

maner of comming towardes him, will preſently yeeld to take the aduantage of his comming, or elſe with all ſpeed put himſelfe into his ſhort ward, to be readie at his comming to make out a ſtrong *Stocata* (as the *Italians* call it:) the other knowing his imperfection in fight, aſſureth himſelfe there can be no great good for him to ſtand long out at the point, preſently redoubleth or reuiueth his ſpirits with perfect reſolution, to make ſhort worke, couragiouſly with ſome offenſiue action, ſuch as nature ſhall beſt yeeld vnto him, flieth in with all force and agilitie: the skilfull man ſtandeth watching to take ſuch aduantages as his ſchoolemaiſter hath taught him, in the which time, manie times it falleth out, he is taught a new time, euen by an vnskilfull man that neuer fought before, is ſore hurt or ſlaine: and if it happen they both miſſe in their offenſiue actions, then by reaſon thereof, and of the imperfect length of their Rapiers, they come to ſtabbing with their Poiniards, wherin there lyeth no defence, becauſe diſtance being broken, iudgement faileth, time is loſt, and their eies (by the ſwift motions of their handes) are deceiued.

Of the long ſingle Rapier, or Rapier and Poiniard-fight betweene two vnskilfull men being valiant.

34 WHen two vnskilfull men (being valiant) ſhall fight with long ſingle Rapiers, there is leſſe danger in that kind of fight, by reaſon of their diſtance in conuenient length, waight, and vnweildineſſe, then is with ſhort Rapiers: whereby it commeth to paſſe, that what hurt ſhall happen to be done, if anie with the edge or point of their Rapiers

Rapiers is done in a moment, and preſently will grapple and wraſtle together, wherin moſt commonly the ſtrongeſt or beſt Wraſtler ouercommeth, and the like fight falleth out betweene them, at the long Rapier and Poiniard, but much more deadly, becauſe in ſtead of Cloſe and Wraſtling, they fall moſt commonly to ſtabbing with their Poiniardes.

Of the imperfection and inſufficiencie of Rapiers in generall, of what length ſoeuer they be.

35

IF two fight with long Rapiers, vpon euerie Croſſe made within the halfe Rapier, if they haue Poiniardes, they moſt commonly ſtabbe each other, which cannot be auoided, becauſe the Rapiers being long, the Croſſe cannot be vndone of either ſide, without going backe with their feete, the which likewiſe in due time cannot be done, becauſe the hand is more ſwifter then the feete, and the feete more ſwifter in their courſe forwardes then backwardes, neither can the Croſſe be preuented, becauſe the point of neceſſitie lyeth too farre off in his offence, or elſe within compaſſe of the true time of the hand and bodie, by reaſon of his imperfect length: and ſo by the like reaſons, if two fight with long ſingle Rapiers, vpon euerie Croſſe made therewith, within the halfe Rapier, the Cloſe cannot be auoided, wherby it commeth to paſſe moſt commonly, that the ſtrongeſt man or beſt Wraſtler ouercommeth. Now if two do fight with ſhort Rapiers, or Rapiers of conuenient length, ſuch Rapiers be inconuenient and inſufficient alſo for lacke of an hilt to defend the hand and head from the blow; for no eie (in making a

If they ſtand vpon breaking with their Daggers, he that firſt winneth the place, and thruſteth home, hurteth the other for lacke of the circũference: if both thruſt together, they are both ſped, becauſe their Spaces of Defence are too wide to anſwere the time of the hand, and by the ſwift motion thereof, the eye in that diſtance is ly the ſame deceiued. The feete in their courſe, but not in the firſt motion, alwaies note for the auoiding of great errours.

perfect ward for the head, to defend a blow, can diſcerne to take the ſame within three or foure inches, wherby it may as well and as often fall vpon the hand, as vpon the blade of the Rapier. Againe, the hilt as well ſerueth to defend the head as the hand, and is a more ſure and ſtrong ward, then is the blade of the Rapier. And further, vnderſtand this for truth, that in gardant and open fight, the hand without an hilt lieth open to moſt blowes that ſhalbe ſtroken by the Agent, out of the gardant or open fight, becauſe in the true cariage of the gardant fight, the hand muſt lie aboue the head, in ſuch ſtraightnes and narrownes of ſpace, that which way ſoeuer the Agent ſhall ſtrike or thruſt at the head, face, or bodie, the remouing of two or foure inches ſhall ſaue all. And now ſomewhat more for the ſhortneſſe or conuenient length of Rapiers.

Rapiers hauing no hilts to defend the head, the Rapier-man is driuen of neceſſitie to lie at the variable fight or low ward, and being there he can neither defend in due time, head, face, nor bodie from the blowes or thruſtes of him, that ſhall fight out of the gardant or open fight, but is continually in great danger of the Agent, for theſe cauſes following. Firſt, becauſe his ſpace is too wide to defend his head from blow or thruſt. Secondly his Pace ſtanding vpon that fight, wilbe of neceſſitie too great or too narrow: if too narrow, too weak: if too large, his weight and number of his feet, are too great to endanger him, that is vpon his gardant or open fight.

Of

Of the imperfection and insufficiencie of the fight of the single Rapier, Rapier and Poiniard, Rapier and Buckler, Rapier and Cloke, and Rapier and Gloue of maile.

THe Rapier fight, whether it be single or accõpanied with Poiniard, Buckler, cloke, or gloue of male, is still by reason of the insufficiencie or imperfection of the Rapier, an imperfect fight: vnperfect instruments can make no perfect musicke, neither can vnperfect weapons make perfect fight: let the men that handle them haue all the knowledge that may be in all maner of weapons, yea the full height, or perfection, and true habite by his great labour and industry, euen as it were naturally effected in him, yet if the weapons that they shall fight withall be imperfect or insufficient to performe whatsoeuer appertaineth vnto true fight, as concerning the perfection of their safetie, it auaileth them nothing. What shall we then say for the Rapier? Is the Rapier an imperfect or insufficient weapon to perfourme whatsoeuer appertaineth vnto the true fight? Yea: Wherefore? Because vnto the true fight there appertaineth foure fights, Gardant fight, Open fight, Variable fight, and Close fight: without all foure of these fights it is impossible to fight safe: but the Rapier for lacke of an hilt is an vnperfect weapon, and therefore insufficient to fight safe vpon these foure fights, the reasons are alreadie set downe in the Paradoxe before, but it is inferred to loose the benefit of two of the 36

beſt fights, gardant and open fight, and to flie from thē, and truſt only vnto variable fight, and cloſe fight. Now hauing proued through the imperfection or inſufficiencie of the Rapier, the imperfection of the Rapier fight, it remaineth that I ſpeake of the reſt of the weapons, or inſtruments appertaining vnto Rapier fight.

The Rapier and Poiniard fight, the Rapier & Buckler fight, the Rapier and cloke fight, & the Rapier & gloue of male fight: all theſe fights by reaſon of the imperfection of the Rapier, and Rapier fight, are all alſo imperfect fights: and for proofe of the vncertaintie and impoſſibilities of ſafetie in any of theſe fights, thus it ſtandeth. Theſe fights depend altogether vpō variable fight and cloſe fight: in anie of theſe fights it is impoſſible in true ſpace of Offence to keepe the blades of their Rapiers from croſſing, or frō breaking with the Poiniards, buckler, cloke, or breaking or catching with the gloue of male; becauſe in anie of theſe two fights, the Agent hath ſtill in true ſpace the blade of the Patients Rapier to worke vpon. Theſe things by letters cannot be made more plaine, neither is it vnknowne to the skilfull, or in fight by anie meanes to be auoided, the weapon being too farre in true ſpace to be wrought vpon, the place cannot be denied, do the patient Agent what he can for his life to the contrarie, either by blowes, thruſts, falſing, or doubling of thruſts, going backe, indirections, or turnings of the body, or what elſe ſoeuer may in the higheſt touch of wit or ſtrength, or agilitie of bodie be deuiſed or done, to keepe out the Agent: but ſtill the Agent by narrownèſſe of ſpace bringeth himſelf by ſtrōg gard to the place, where being brought, it is as impoſſible to fight ſafe, as it is for two deſperate men ſet together

ther being both blind; becauſe in the true place (wonne in Rapier or variable fight) their eyes by the ſwift motions of their hands are deceiued, the croſſes in that fight are falſe, their diſtance, iudgements and times are loſt, either to offend in ſafetie, or ſafely to defend themſelues: and theſe reaſons, rules, or grounds of the feates of armes are infallible and inuincible.

Now, ô you Italian teachers of Defence, where are your *Stocatas*, *Imbrocatas*, *Mandritas*, *Puntas*, & *Puynta reuerſas*, *Stramiſons*, *Paſſatas*, *Carricados*, *Amazzas*, & *Incartatas*, & playing with your bodies, remouing with your feet a litle aſide, circle wiſe winding of your bodies, making of three times with your feet together, marking with one eye the motion of the aduerſary, & with the other eye the aduãtage of thruſting? What is become of all theſe iugling gambalds, Apiſh deuiſes, with all the reſt of your ſquint-eyed trickes, when as through your deepe ſtudies, long practiſes, & apt bodies, both ſtrong & agilious, you haue attained to the height of all theſe things? What then auaileth it you, when you ſhal come to fight for your liues with a man of skill? you ſhall haue neither time, nor place, in due time to performe any one of them, nor gardant nor open fight ſafely to keep out a man of skill, a man of no skill, or ſcholler of your owne teaching, from the true place, the place of ſafetie, the place of vncertaintie or miſchiefe, the place of wounds or death, but are there inforced to ſtand in that miſchieuous, vncertaine, dangerous, and moſt deadly place, as two men hauing loſt in part their chiefeſt ſences, moſt furiouſly with their rapiers or poiniards, wounding or ſlaying each other.

Thus endeth the imperfect fights of the rapier with

all maner of weapons or inſtruments thereto appertaining, with their imperfections, through the true groũds and rules of the Art of armes, truly diſplayed & brought to light.

All laud be vnto the Almighty God.

That the reaſons vſed by the Italian Fencers in commending the vſe of the Rapier and Poiniard, becauſe it maketh peace, maketh againſt themſelues.

37 IT hath bin commonly held, that ſince the Italians haue taught the Rapier fight, by reaſon of the dangerous vſe therof, it hath bred great ciuilitie amongſt our Engliſh nation, they will not now giue the lye, nor with ſuch foule ſpeeches abuſe themſelues, therefore there are fewer frayes in theſe times then were wont to be: it cannot be denied but this is true, that we are more circumſpect of our words, and more fearefull to fight, then heretofore we haue bene. But whereof commeth it? Is it from this, that the Rapier maketh peace in our minds; or from hence, that it is not ſo ſufficient defence for our bodies in our fight? He that will fight when he is armed, will not fight when he is naked: is it therefore good to go naked to keepe peace? he that would fight with his Sword and Buckler, or Sword and Dagger, being weapons of true defence, will not fight with his Rapier and Poiniard, wherein no true defence or fight is perfect: are theſe inſufficiẽt weapõs therfore the better, becauſe not being ſufficiẽt to defẽd vs in fight, they force vs vnto peace? What elſe is it, but to ſay, it is good for ſubiects

There are few frayes, but more valiant Gentlemẽ ſlaine now then were then.

ſubiects to be poore, that they may not go to law: or to lacke munition, that they may not fight, nor go to the warres: and to conclude, what more followeth through the imperfect workes of theſe *Italian* peacemakers? They haue made many a ſtrong man in his fight weake, many a valiant man fearefull, manie a worthie man truſting to their imperfect fight, hath bene ſlaine, and manie of our deſperate boyes and young youthes, to become in that Rapier-fight, as good men as *England* yeeldeth, and the talleſt men in this land, in that fight as verie boyes as they and no better. This good haue the *Italian* teachers of Offence done vs, they haue transformed our boyes into men, and our men into boyes, our ſtrong men into weakeneſſe, our valiant men doubtfull, and manie worthie men reſoluing themſelues vpon their falſe reſolutions, haue moſt wilfully in the field, with their Rapiers ended their liues. And laſtly, haue left to remaine amongſt vs after their deathes, theſe inconueniences behind them, falſe Fence-bookes, imperfect weapons, falſe fightes, and euill cuſtomes, whereby for lacke of vſe and practiſe in perfect weapons and true fight, we are diſabled for the ſeruice of our Prince, defence of our countrey, and ſafetie of our liues in priuate fight.

That the short Sword hath the aduantage againſt the long Sword or long Rapier.

WHereas for the moſt part opinions are 38
generally holden, that the long Sword, or long Rapier, hath the vantage in fight againſt the ſhort Sword, which the *Italian* teachers of Defence, by their falſe de-

monſtratiõs haue brought vs to beleeue. I haue thought good that the truth may appeare which hath the vantage, to adde my helpe vnto the reaſons they vſe in their owne behalfe, for that yet I could neuer heare them make a ſound reaſon for the ſame. Theſe are the reaſons.

Theſe reaſons are vſed by the Italians.

Firſt with my long Rapier, I will put my ſelfe into my gard or *Stocata*, holding my hilt backe by the outſide of my right thigh, keeping in ſhort the point of my Rapier, ſo as he that hath the ſhort Sword, ſhall not be able to reach the point of my Rapier, to make his ward or Croſſe with his Dagger, Buckler, Sword, or Cloke, without ſtepping in of his foote, the which time is too long to anſwere the time of the hand, by reaſon of my diſtance. I can there ſtand ſafe without danger of blow or thruſt, playing the Patients part: if you ſtrike or thruſt you do it too ſhort, by reaſon of my diſtance: if you ſeek to come nearer, you muſt do it with the time of your foote, in the which time I may ſafely thruſt home: if in that diſtance you breake it not, you are ſlaine: if you do breake it, yet you do me no harme, by reaſon of my diſtance, and I may ſtand faſt and thruſt againe, or flie backe at my pleaſure: ſo haue you put your ſelfe in danger of your life, and hauing hardly eſcaped, are driuen againe to begin a new bought, as at the firſt you did. Againe, if I pleaſe, I can be the oppreſſour, keeping the ſame gard, and my point in ſhort as I did before, and preſſing ſtrongly by putting in by litle and litle of my feete, vntill the place with my foote be gotten, wherein (in my iudgement) I may thruſt home, the which I may boldly and ſafely do, without reſpect of anie ward at all, by reaſon of my diſtance, in which time of my comming he muſt ſtrike, thruſt, ward, or go backe: if he go backe,

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it is a great diſgrace: if he ſtrike or thruſt, it is too ſhort: if he ſtand to defend, the place being alreadie gotten, where I may thruſt home, the thruſt being verie quicke & ſtrongly made, ſuch is the force and ſwiftneſſe thereof, that it is impoſſible by nature or art, for anie man to breake one thruſt of an hundred. Theſe reaſons in my opinion may ſuffice to confirme the wiſe, that there is no queſtion to be made, but that the long Rapier hath the aduantage againſt the ſhort Sword.

A confutation of the Italians reaſons.

Sir you haue pretily handled your diſcourſe, concerning the vantages of the long Rapier againſt the ſhort Sword, eſpecially at the firſt ſhew, and according to common fence, but for the ſubſtance and truth of the true fight, you haue ſaid nothing, becauſe for the performance of anie of your allegations, you haue neither true Pace, Place, Time, nor Space: theſe are the reaſons. Your Pace of neceſſitie muſt be too large, becauſe otherwiſe you cannot keepe ſafe the point of your long Rapier, from the Croſſe of the ſhort Sword, vnleſſe you will with a narrow Pace keepe backe your hilt ſo farre, that the ſpace of your offence wilbe too large or too long in diſtance, and your bodie vnapt to moue and to thruſt both ſtrong and quicke in due time, nor aptly to keepe your diſtance, to win the place with your feete, to thruſt home. So now you may plainely ſee, if you haue skill in the art or ſcience of Defence, that to performe anie thing which you haue alleadged, you haue neither true Pace, Place, time nor Space. But if you will ſtand vpon the largeneſſe of your Pace, to keepe backe or ſaue the point of your long Rapier from the ward or Croſſe of the ſhort Sword, or vpon your *Paſſatos*, in all theſe you haue great diſaduantages: and

theſe are my reaſons: Your number will be too great, as thus: whenſoeuer you meane out of your large pace to thruſt home, you muſt of neceſſitie make foure times with your feet, and one with your hand, or two times with your feet, and one with your hand at the leaſt: and whenſoeuer you make any of your paſſages, the nũber of your feet are greater then the greateſt of any of theſe times done out of the large pace: but the patient with his ſhort ſword, to auoyd you, or diſappoint you of your thruſt, hath but one time with his foot, at or before the which time, as he in his iudgemẽt ſhall find you in your motion, hath by the ſlow and great number of your motions or times, ſufficient time ſafely out of all danger to make himſelfe readie to take his croſſe with his ſhort ſword. Now Sir, whether you thruſt or not thruſt, whether you play the part of an Agent, or Patient, it helpeth you nothing, for he that hath the ſhort ſword hath foure times or motions againſt the long Rapier, namely, bent, ſpent, lying ſpent, and drawing backe, in all maner of fights theſe are to be obſerued both by the Patient and Agent. Now note, he that hath the long Rapier muſt of neceſſitie play vpon one of theſe foure motions, or be Patient, which ſoeuer he ſhall do, he is ſtill in great danger of the croſſe of the ſhort ſword, becauſe if he be Agent, his number is too great, he falleth into one of the foure motions, the Patient with his ſhort ſword, hauing but the time of the hand, or hãd & foot, ſafely vpon theſe actions or times taketh his croſſe with the ſhort Sword: that being done, he preſently vncroſſeth and ſtriketh or thruſteth at his pleaſure him that hath the long Rapier, in the head, face, or bodie. Now here is againe to be noted, that when the croſſe

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is made, if he that hath the long Rapier ſtand faſt, he is wounded preſently in the vncroſſing of the ſhort ſword, if he ſtep or leape backe to ſaue himſelfe, yet the time of the hand being ſwifter then the time of the foot, ouertaketh him, with blow or thruſt in the arme, hand, head, face and bodie. Now if he that hath the long Rapier will be patient & make no play, but lie ſtill watching to make his thruſt or *Stocata* iuſt in the comming or mouing of the Agents feete with his ſhort ſword, then he hath as great diſaduantage as he had when he was Patient, becauſe thē the Agent with his ſhort Sword hath but hand and foot to make his croſſe: which is moſt ſafely to be done in that time, which we call Bent, and is as impoſſible for the Rapier-man to preuent, as it is for an vnskilfull to ſtrike or thruſt iuſt together with a man of skill. Then thus I conclude, that he that fighteth with a long Rapier, againſt him that fighteth with a ſhort Sword, can do nothing in due time to defend himſelfe, or hurt the other, but is ſtill in daunger of his life, or at the mercie of him that hath the ſhort Sword, or elſe hath no ſafe way to helpe himſelfe, but onely *Cobs* Trauerſe. *Cobs Trauerſe.* This *Cob* was a great quareller, and did delight in great brauerie to giue foule words to his betters, and would not refuſe to go into the field to fight with any man, and when he came into the field, would draw his Sword to fight, for he was ſure by the cunning of his Trauerſe, not to be hurt by anie man: for at anie time finding himſelfe ouermatched would ſuddenly turne his backe and runne away with ſuch ſwiftneſſe, that it was thought a good horſe would ſcarce take him. And this when I was a young man, was verie much ſpoken of by many Gentlemen of the Innes of

the Court, and was called *Cobs* Trauerſe and thoſe that had ſeene anie go backe too faſt in his fight, would ſay, he did tread *Cobs* Trauerſe.

George Silver his militarie riddle, truly ſet downe betweene the Perfection and Imperfection of fight: containing the handling of the foure fights: wherein true conſiſteth the whole ſumme and full perfection of the true fight, with all maner of weapons, with an inuicible concluſion.

GArdant fight ſtayeth, putteth backe, or beateth gardant fight.

Open fight ſtayeth, putteth backe, or beateth open fight.

Variable fight anſwereth variable fight in the firſt diſtance, and not otherwiſe, except it be with the perfect length againſt the imperfect.

Cloſe fight is beaten by gardant fight.

Variable cloſe & gardant fight, beateth gardant fight, open fight, variable fight, and cloſe fight.

Gardant fight in the imperfection of the Agent or Patient, winneth the halfe ſword, and preuenteth the cloſe, and whoſoeuer firſt ventureth the cloſe, looſeth it, and is in great danger of death, and not poſſible to eſcape or get out againe without great hurt.

There attendeth moſt diligently vpon theſe foure fights foure offenſiue actions, which we call certaine, vncertaine, firſt, before, iuſt, and afterwards: they are to be performed through iudgement, time, meaſure, number and waight, by which all maner of blowes, thruſts,

thruſts, falſes, doubles, or ſlips, are preuented, or moſt ſafely defended. And thus endeth my riddle.

Now followeth the concluſion, that whoſoeuer ſhall thinke or find himſelfe in his fight too weake for the Agent, or Patient Agent, and therefore, or by reaſon of his drunkenneſſe, or vnreaſonable deſperateneſſe ſhall preſe within the halfe Sword, or deſerately runne in of purpoſe to giue hurt, or at leaſt for taking of one hurt, to giue another, ſhall moſt aſſuredly be in great daunger of death or wounds, and the other ſhall ſtill be ſafe and go free.

Veritas vincit.

A BRIEFE NOTE OF THREE ITA-lian *Teachers of Offence.*

I write not this to diſgrace the dead, but to ſhew their impudẽt boldneſſe and inſufficiency in performance of their profeſſion when they were liuing: that from henceforth this briefe note may be a remembrance and warning to beware of bad I wiſh.

THere were three Italian Teachers of Offence in my time. The firſt was *Signior Rocko*: the ſe cond was *Ieronimo*, that was *Signior Rocko* his boy, that taught Gentlemen in the *Blacke-Fryers*, as Vſher for his maiſter in ſteed of a man. The third was *Vincentio*. This *Signior Rocko* came into *England* about ſome thirtie yeares paſt: he taught the Noblemen & Gentlemen of the Court; he cauſed ſome of them to weare leaden ſoales in their ſhoes, the better to bring them to nimbleneſſe of feet in their fight. He disburſed a great ſumme of mony for the leaſe of a faire houſe in *Warwicke* lane, which he called his Colledge, for he thought it great diſgrace for him to keepe a Fence-ſchoole, he being then thought to be the onely famous Maiſter of the Art of armes in the whole world. He cauſed to be fairely drawne and ſet round about his Schoole all the Noblemens and Gentlemens armes that were his Schollers, and hanging right vnder their armes their Rapiers, daggers, gloues of male and gantlets. Alſo, he had benches and ſtooles, the roome being verie large, for Gentlemẽ to ſit round about his Schoole to behold his teaching. He taught none commonly vnder twentie, fortie, fifty, or an hundred pounds. And becauſe all things ſhould be verie neceſſary for the Noblemẽ & gentlemẽ, he had

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in his ſchoole a large ſquare table, with a greene carpet, done round with a verie brode rich fringe of gold, alwaies ſtanding vpon it a verie faire Standiſh couered with Crimſon Veluet, with inke, pens, pin-duſt, and ſealing waxe, and quiers of verie excellent fine paper gilded, readie for the Noblemen & Gentlemen (vpon occaſion) to write their letters, being then deſirous to follow their fight, to ſend their men to diſpatch their buſineſſe. And to know how the time paſſed, he had in one corner of his ſchoole a Clocke, with a verie faire large Diall, he had within that ſchoole, a roome the which was called his priuie ſchoole, with manie weapons therein, where he did teach his ſchollers his ſecret fight, after he had perfectly taught them their rules. He was verie much beloued in the Court.

There was one *Auſten Bagger*, a verie tall gentleman of his handes, not ſtanding much vpon his skill, but carying the valiant hart of an Engliſhman, vpon a time being merrie amongſt his friendes, ſaid he would go fight with *Signior Rocco*, preſently went to *Signior Rocco* his houſe in the *Blackefriers*, and called to him in this maner: *Signior Rocco*, thou that art thought to be the onely cunning man in the world with thy weapon, thou that takeſt vpon thee to hit anie Engliſhman with a thruſt vpon anie button, thou that takeſt vpon thee to come ouer the ſeas, to teach the valiant Noblemen and Gentlemen of *England* to fight, thou cowardly fellow come out of thy houſe if thou dare for thy life, I am come to fight with thee. *Signior Rocco* looking out at a window, perceiuing him in the ſtreet to ſtand readie with his Sword and Buckler, with his two hand Sword drawne, with all ſpeed ran into the ſtreet, and manfully

let flie at *Auſten Bagger*, who moſt brauely defended himſelfe, and preſently cloſed with him, and ſtroke vp his heeles, and cut him ouer the breech, and trode vpon him, and moſt grieuouſly hurt him vnder his feet: yet in the end *Auſten* of his good nature gaue him his life, and there left him. This was the firſt and laſt fight that euer *Signior Rocco* made, ſauing once at Queene Hith he drew his Rapier vpon a waterman, where he was throughly beaten with Oares and Stretchers, but the oddes of their weapons were as great againſt his Rapier, as was his two hand Sword againſt *Auſten Baggers* Sword and Buckler, therefore for that fray he was to be excuſed.

Then came in *Vincentio* and *Ieronimo*, they taught Rapier-fight at the Court, at *London*, and in the countrey, by the ſpace of ſeauen or eight yeares or thereabouts. Theſe two *Italian* Fencers, eſpecially *Vincentio*, ſaid that Engliſhmen were ſtrong men, but had no cunning, and they would go backe too much in their fight, which was great diſgrace vnto them. Vpon theſe words of diſgrace againſt Engliſhmen, my brother *Toby Silver* and my ſelfe, made challenge againſt them both, to play with them at the ſingle Rapier, Rapier and Dagger, the ſingle Dagger, the ſingle Sword, the Sword and Target, the Sword and Buckler, & two hand Sword, the Staffe, battell Axe, and Morris Pike, to be played at the Bell Saua ge vpon the Scaffold, where he that went in his fight faſter backe then he ought, of Engliſhman or Italian, ſhold be in danger to breake his necke off the Scaffold. We cauſed to that effect, fiue or ſixe ſcore Bils of challenge to be printed, and ſet vp from *Southwarke* to the Tower, and from thence through *London* vnto *Weſtminſter*,

minſter, we were at the place with all theſe weapons at the time apointed, within a bow ſhot of their Fence ſchoole: many gentlemen of good accompt, caried manie of the bils of chalenge vnto them, telling them that now the *Siluers* were at the place appointed, with all their weapons, looking for them, and a multitude of people there to behold the ſight, ſaying vnto them, now come and go with vs (you ſhall take no wrong) or elſe you are ſhamed for euer. Do the gentlemen what they could, theſe gallants would not come to the place of triall. I verily thinke their cowardly feare to anſwere this chalenge, had vtterly ſhamed them indeed, had not the maiſters of Defence of *London*, within two or three daies after, bene drinking of bottell Ale hard by *Vincentios* ſchoole, in a Hall where the *Italians* muſt of neceſſitie paſſe through to go to their ſchoole: and as they were comming by, the maiſters of Defence did pray them to drinke with them, but the *Italians* being verie cowardly, were afraide, and preſently drew their Rapiers: there was a pretie wench ſtanding by, that loued the *Italians*, ſhe ran with ourcrie into the ſtreet, helpe, helpe, the *Italians* are like to be ſlaine: the people with all ſpeede came running into the houſe, and with their Cappes and ſuch things as they could get, parted the fraie, for the Engliſh maiſters of Defence, meant nothing leſſe then to foile their handes vpon theſe two faint-harted fellowes. The next morning after, all the Court was filled, that the *Italian* teachers of Fence had beaten all the maiſters of Defence in *London*, who ſet vpon them in a houſe together. This wan the *Italian* Fencers their credit againe, and thereby got much, ſtill continuing their falſe teaching to the end of their liues.

This *Vincentio* proued himſelfe a ſtout man not long before he died, that it might be ſeene in his life time he had bene a gallant, and therefore no maruaile he tooke vpon him ſo highly to teach Engliſhmen to fight, and to ſet forth bookes of the feates of Armes. Vpon a time at *Wels* in Somerſetſhire, as he was in great brauerie amongſt manie gentlemen of good accompt, with great boldneſſe he gaue out ſpeeches, that he had bene thus manie yeares in *England*, and ſince the time of his firſt comming, there was not yet one Engliſhman, that could once touch him at the ſingle Rapier, or Rapier and Dagger. A valiant gentleman being there amongſt the reſt, his Engliſh hart did riſe to heare this proude boaſter, ſecretly ſent a meſſenger to one *Bartholomew Bramble* a friend of his, a verie tall man both of his hands and perſon, who kept a ſchoole of Defence in the towne, the meſſenger by the way made the maiſter of Defence acquainted with the mind of the gentleman that ſent for him, and of all what *Vincentio* had ſaid, this maiſter of Defence preſently came, and amongſt all the gentlemen with his cap off, prayed maiſter *Vincentio*, that he would be pleaſed to take a quart of wine of him. *Vincentio* verie ſcornefully looking vpon him, ſaid vnto him. Wherefore ſhould you giue me a quart of wine? Marie Sir, ſaid he, becauſe I heare you are a famous man at your weapon. Then preſently ſaid the gentleman that ſent for the maiſter of Defence: Maiſter *Vincentio*, I pray you bid him welcome, he is a man of your profeſſion. My profeſſion ſaid *Vincentio*? what is my profeſſion. Then ſaid the gentleman, he is a maiſter of the noble ſcience of Defence. Why ſaid maiſter *Vincẽtio*, God make him a good man. But the maiſter of Defence wold

not

not thus leaue him, but prayed him againe he would be pleaſed to take a quart of wine of him. Thē ſaid *Vincētio*, I haue no need of thy wine. Then ſaid the maiſter of Defence: Sir I haue a ſchoole of Defence in the towne, will it pleaſe you to go thither. Thy ſchoole, ſaid maiſter *Vincentio*? what ſhall I do at thy ſchoole? play with me (ſaid the maiſter) at the Rapier and Dagger, if it pleaſe you. Play with thee ſaid maiſter *Vincentio*? if I play with thee, I will hit thee 1. 2. 3. 4. thruſtes in the eie together. Then ſaid the maiſter of Defence, if you can do ſo, it is the better for you, and the worſe for me, but ſurely I can hardly beleeue that you can hit me: but yet once againe I hartily pray you good Sir, that you will go to my ſchoole, and play with me. Play with thee ſaid maiſter *Vincentio* (verie ſcornefully?) by God me ſcorne to play with thee. With that word ſcorne, the maiſter of Defence was verie much moued, and vp with his great Engliſh fiſt, and ſtroke maiſter *Vincentio* ſuch a boxe on the eare that he fell ouer and ouer, his legges iuſt againſt a Butterie hatch, whereon ſtood a great blacke Iacke: the maiſter of Defence fearing the worſt, againſt *Vincentio* his riſing, catcht the blacke Iacke into his hand, being more then halfe full of Beere. *Vincentio* luſtily ſtart vp, laying his hand vpon his Dagger, & with the other hand pointed with his finger, ſaying, very well: I will cauſe to lie in the Gaile for this geare, 1. 2. 3 4. yeares. And well ſaid the maiſter of Defence, ſince you will drinke no wine, will you pledge me in Beere? I drinke to all the cowardly knaues in *England*, and I thinke thee to be the verieſt coward of them all: with that he caſt all the Beere vpon him: notwithſtanding *Vincentio* hauing nothing but his guilt Rapier, and

Dagger about him, and the other for his defence the blacke Iacke, would not at that time fight it out: but the next day met with the maiſter of Defence in the ſtreete, and ſaid vnto him, you remember how miſuſed a me yeſterday, you were to blame, me be an excellent man, me teach you how to thruſt two foote further then anie Engliſhman, but firſt come you with me: then he brought him to a Mercers ſhop, and ſaid to the Mercer, let me ſee of your beſt ſilken Pointes, the Mercer did preſently ſhew him ſome of ſeauen groates a dozen, then he payeth fourteene groates for two dozen, and ſaid to the maiſter of Defence, there is one dozen for you, and here is another for me. This was one of the valianteſt Fencers that came from beyond the ſeas, to teach Engliſhmen to fight, and this was one of the manlieſt frayes, that I haue hard of, that euer he made in *England*, wherin he ſhewed himſelfe a farre better man in his life, then in his profeſſion he was, for he profeſſed armes, but in his life a better Chriſtian. He ſet forth in print a booke for the vſe of the Rapier and Dagger, the which he called his practiſe, I haue read it ouer, and becauſe I finde therein neither true rule for the perfect teaching of true fight, nor true ground of true fight, neither ſence or reaſon for due proofe thereof. I haue thought it friuolous to recite any part therin contained: yet that the truth hereof may appeare, let two mē being wel experienced in the Rapier and Dagger fight, chooſe any of the beſt branches in the ſame booke, & make trial with force and agility, without the which the truth betweene the true & falſe fight cannot be knowne, & they ſhall find great imperfections therein. And againe, for proofe that there is no truth, neither in his rules, groūds

or

or Rapier-fight, let triall be made in this maner: Set two vnskilfull men together at the Rapier and Dagger, being valiant, and you ſhall ſee, that once in two boutes there ſhall either one or both of them be hurt. Then ſet two skilfull men together, being valiant at the Rapier and Dagger, and they ſhall do the like. Then ſet a skilful Rapier and Dagger-man the beſt that can be had, and a valiant man hauing no skill together at Rapier & Dagger, and once in two bouts vpon my credit in all the experience I haue in fight, the vnskilful man, do the other what he can for his life to the contrarie, ſhall hurt him, and moſt commonly if it were in continuance of fight, you ſhall ſee the vnskilfull man to haue the aduantage. And if I ſhould chuſe a valiant man for ſeruice of the Prince, or to take part with me or anie friend of mine in a good quarrell, I would chuſe the vnskilfull man, being vnencombred with falſe fights, becauſe ſuch a man ſtandeth free in his valour with ſtrength and agilitie of bodie, freely taketh the benefit of nature, fighteth moſt braue, by looſing no oportunitie, either ſoundly to hurt his enemie, or defend himſelfe, but the other ſtanding for his Defence, vpon his cunning Italian wardes, *Pointa reuerſa*, the *Imbrocata*, *Stocata*, and being faſt tyed vnto theſe falſe fightes, ſtandeth troubled in his wits, and nature therby racked through the largeneſſe or falſe lyings or Spaces, whereby he is in his fight as a man halfe maimed, looſing the oportunity of times & benefit of nature, & whereas before being ignorant of theſe falſe Rapier fightes, ſtanding in the free libertie of nature giuen him by god, he was able in the field with his weapō to anſwere the valianteſt man in the world, but now being tied vnto that falſe fickle vncertaine fight, there-

Proofes againſt the Rapier fight.

by hath loſt in nature his freedome, is now become ſcarce halfe a man, and euerie boye in that fight is become as good a man as himſelfe.

Ieronimo this gallant was valiant, and would fight indeed, and did, as you ſhall heare. He being in a Coch with a wench that he loued well, there was one *Cheeſe*, a verie tall man, in his fight naturall Engliſh, for he fought with his Sword and Dagger, and in Rapier-fight had no skill at all. This *Cheeſe* hauing a quarrell to *Ieronimo*, ouertooke him vpon the way, himſelfe being on horſebacke, did call to *Ieronimo*, and bad him come forth of the Coch or he would fetch him, for he was come to fight with him. *Ieronimo* preſently went forth of the Coch and drew his Rapier and dagger, put himſelf into his beſt ward or *Stocata* which ward was taught by himſelfe and *Vincentio*, and by them beſt allowed of, to be the beſt ward to ſtand vpon in fight for life, either to aſſault the enemie, or ſtand and watch his comming, which ward it ſhould ſeeme he ventured his life vpon, but howſoeuer with all the fine Italienated skill *Ieronimo* had, *Cheeſe* with his Sword within two thruſtes ran him into the bodie and ſlue him. Yet the Italian teachers will ſay, that an Engliſhmã cannot thruſt ſtraight with a Sword, becauſe the hilt will not ſuffer him to put the forefinger ouer the Croſſe, nor to put the thumbe vpon the blade, nor to hold the pummell in the hand, whereby we are of neceſſitie to hold faſt the handle in the hand: by reaſon whereof we are driuen to thruſt both compaſſe and ſhort, whereas with the Rapier they can thruſt both ſtraight and much further then we can with the Sword, becauſe of the hilt: and theſe be the reaſons they make againſt the Sword.

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